

Interfaith Study
of
Guru Granth Sahib



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Editor

Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon



**Guru Nanak Dev University
Amritsar**

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**Department of Guru Nanak Studies
Guru Nanak Dev University
Amritsar**

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Foreword

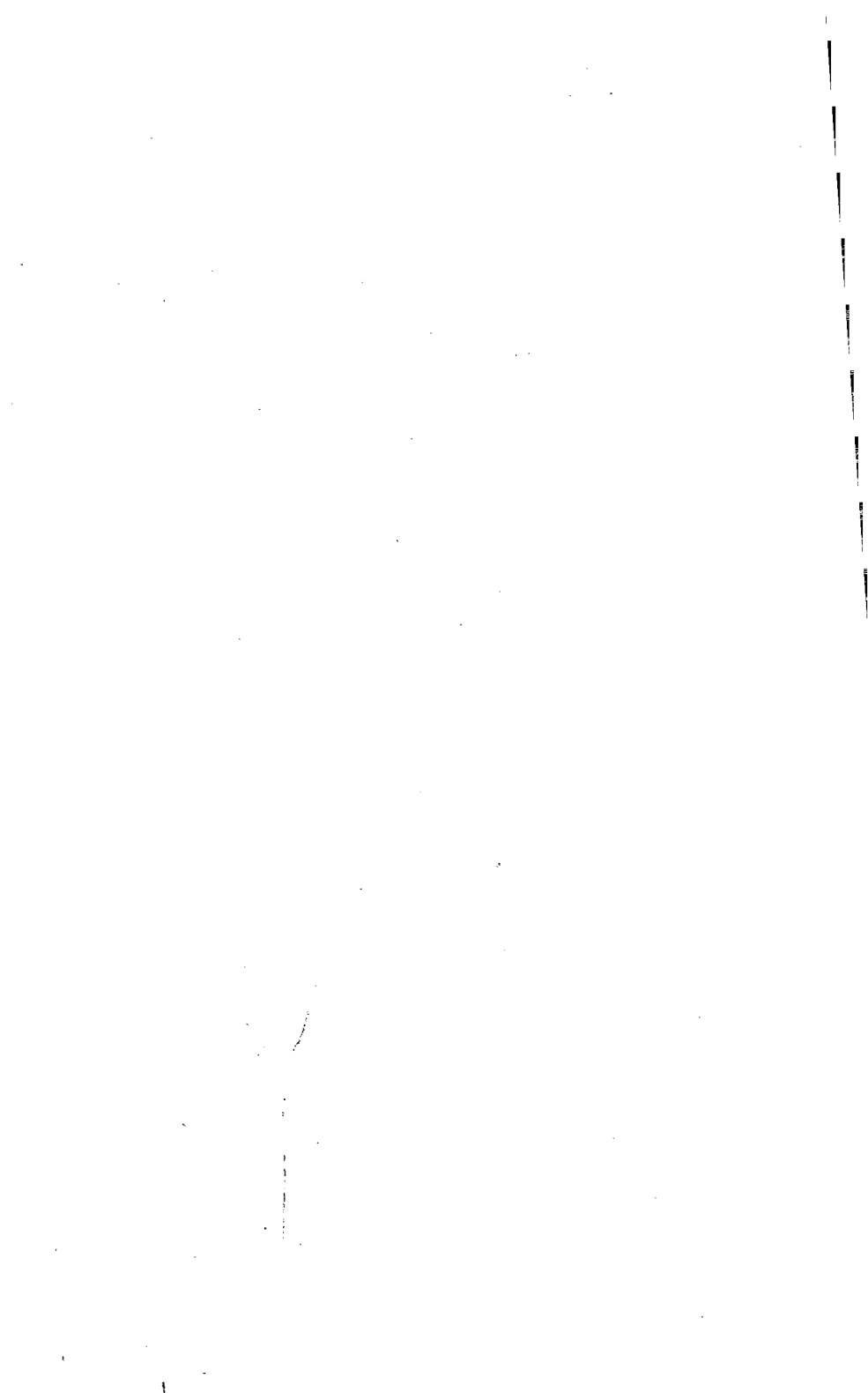
The teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs, have universal appeal and validity. Its message is so modernistic, open-minded, altruistic, egalitarian and cosmopolitan that it can show the path of ethical living, enlightened spiritualism, universal brotherhood and peaceful coexistence to the whole humanity. As such, the Sikhs and their religious shrines are now known world over despite their small numbers. Sikhism finds the place of honour amongst the world religions. The quadri-centennial anniversary of the canonization of Sikh Scripture was a solemn occasion which was celebrated by the Sikhs all over the world with religious zeal and fervour.

Guru Nanak Dev University continuing its participation to celebrate the event has successfully hosted a series of international conferences on Guru Granth Sahib. In this connection third international conference on *Guru Granth Sahib: Interfaith Understanding to World Peace* was held on December 3-5, 2003. The response of the well known national and international scholars in Sikhism was very overwhelming and encouraging as well. More than two dozen foreign delegates and about six dozen national scholars responded to our invitation and sent papers with contents of great scholarly standards. Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Director of the aforementioned conference has compiled and edited all these papers for the benefit of scholars interested in the message of Guru Granth Sahib. These papers enlighten us about the message of Guru Granth Sahib and its role in the modern interfaith movement. This work has given me a great satisfaction and pleasure.

I am sure the scholars and students will find this work very helpful to comprehend the Sikh perspective of interfaith understanding. I am also sure that this book would also be useful in spreading the gospel of Guru Granth Sahib for universal brotherhood, peace and harmony.

Dr. S. P. Singh
Vice-Chancellor

Guru Nanak Dev University,
Amritsar

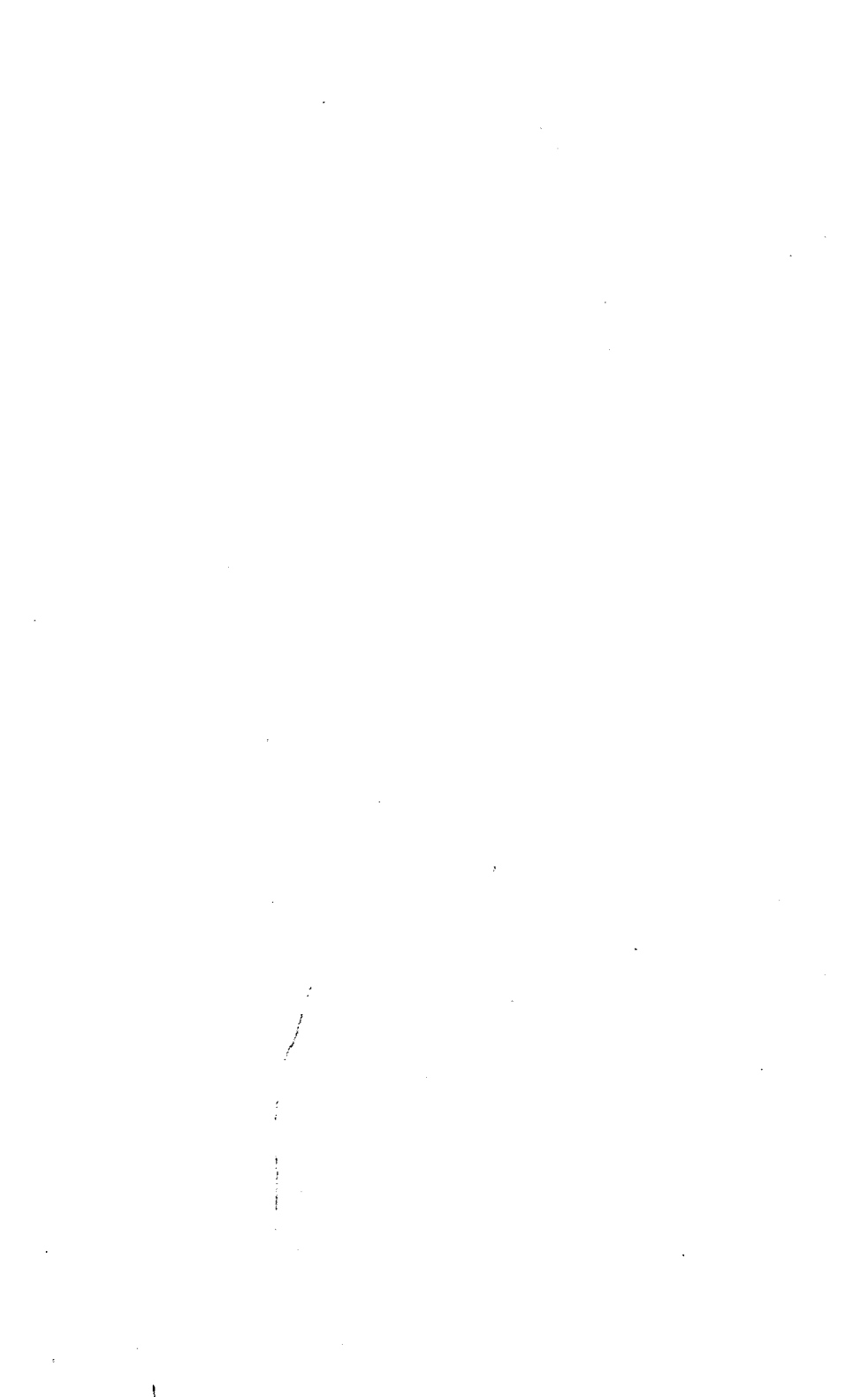


CONTENTS

Introductory Note	Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon	1
Presidential Address	His Excellency Justice (Retd.) Shri O.P. Verma Governor of Punjab	9
Keynote	H.H. Justice Mota Singh Queen's Court England	12
1. Universalism of <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i>	Dr. Satinder Singh	36
2. <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> : Harbinger of World Peace	Balwant Singh Dhillon	39
3. <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> : Message of One Spirit One World	Harbans Lal	44
4. The Sikh Scripture : Inspiration for Action	Gurdev Singh	56
5. <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> : A Guide to the Path of Peace for Humanity	Gurbaksh Singh Gill	70
6. Guru Nanak : Apostle of Religio-Social Goodwill and Amity	Darshan Singh	76
7. Humanism of <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> and World Peace	J.K. Dhillon	86
8. Sikh Model for Universal Consciousness	Balkar Singh	99
9. Multi Dimensional Aspect of Peace in <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i>	Shashi Bala	103
10. <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> : Contribution to World Peace and Harmony	Harnam Singh Shan	115
11. <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> as a Utopia for Humankind	Gurbhagat Singh	132
12. <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> : Messenger of Divine Humanism	Gurbux Singh Shergill	141

13.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> and Culture of Peace	148
	Rajinder Kaur Rohi	
14.	World Peace and Role of Women in the Context of Sikhism : Sociological Perspective	153
	Balwinder Kumari Arora	
15.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> and Right of Progeny to Inherit World Peace	158
	Raghubir Singh Bains	
16.	Conflict and Peace Making	161
	Rajinder Kaur	
17.	World Peace and The United Nations Organization : Contemporary Challenges	164
	Sukhdev Singh Sohal	
18.	World Peace : Challenges and Remedies	172
	Himmat Singh Gill	
19.	Sustainable Development : The Sikh Perspective	174
	Surjit Kaur Chahal	
20.	Humanistic Vision of <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i>	187
	Anita Mehrotra	
21.	Bhakti as Protest : The Poems of Chokhamela	194
	Rohini M. Punekar	
22.	<i>Sabad Guru</i> - Universality and Practical Reality	203
	Inderjit Kaur	
23.	Peace : The Sikh Perspective	211
	Kuldeep Singh	
24.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> : Religious Tolerance and Universal Brotherhood	218
	Bhagwant Singh Dalawari	
25.	"Bare, Ruined Choirs" Reflection-III	223
	N.Q. King	
26.	Understanding the Sikhs through Bani	228
	Nazar Singh	
27.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> and Interfaith Dialogue	239
	Gurnam Kaur	
28.	The Themes of Dialogue and Justice in <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i>	246
	N. Muthu Mohan	
29.	Forgiveness : A Choice Beyond	256
	Elizabeth Espersen	

30.	Sikhism : The Post-Modern Religion of the World	278
	Daya Singh Sandhu	
31.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> : An Interfaith Dialogue	289
	Surjit Kaur Jolly	
32.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> and Religions of the World	296
	Surain Singh Dhanoa	
33.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> as a Precursor of Interfaith Understanding	315
	Kirpal Singh	
34.	Basic Features of Sikhism as a Religion	323
	Mukul Raj Mehta	
35.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> and Holy Bible : An Interfaith Dialogue	330
	H.S. Virk	
36.	Sikh Attitude Towards Religious Pluralism	334
	Dharam Singh	
37.	Guru Nanak and Yogic Tradition	343
	S.K. Dhillon	
38.	Acceptability of Nanakian Philosophy in the Science Age	349
	Devinder Singh Chahal	
39.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> and Interfaith Dialogue	361
	Jogeshwar Singh	
40.	The Interfaith Guru : <i>Guru Granth Sahib Ji</i>	366
	Nanak Singh Nishtar	
41.	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> and the New World Order	369
	Jasdev Singh Rai	
42.	Inter-Religious Dialogue and Action in the 21st Century : <i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> Perspective	373
	Shamsher Singh	



Introductory Note

The Quadri-centennial celebrations of the installation of Sikh Scripture in Darbar Sahib, Amritsar is one of the most solemn occasion in the history of the Sikhs which is being celebrated world over with religious zeal and fervour. As expected it has provided fresh impetus to the studies on *Guru Granth Sahib*. With a view to commemorate it in an academic manner, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar in association with Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Texas, way back in 2001 had planned a series of international conferences on *Guru Granth Sahib*. The main purpose of these conferences is to arouse awareness on the global relevance of the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib*. The Third International Conference in succession to the earlier two held in the years of 2001 and 2002, organized by Department of Guru Nanak Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar on Dec. 3-5, 2003 dwelt on the theme of *Guru Granth Sahib: Interfaith Understanding to World Peace*.

His Excellency, the Governor of Punjab, Justice (Retd.) O.P. Verma in his presidential address at the inaugural session of the conference remarked that the message of oneness of God and universal kinship of humankind of *Guru Granth Sahib* serves as a model for harmony and world peace. It promotes inter-faith understanding and spiritual elevation of all humankind. Its message of love and peace continues to inspire the human beings. It also reflects composite culture of this region for the praxis of universal brotherhood. Its essence revolves around humanism and religious tolerance. It also

remains beacon of hope amidst the socio-economic inequalities in many societies of the world.

Justice Mota Singh of Queen's Court, England in his keynote address said that the fundamental need of the world was spiritual re-wakening; a recovery of faith. Humankind's highest destiny was to become more human, more spiritual and more capable of sympathetic understanding. The greatest danger facing humanity after the collapse of secular ideologies was nationalism fuelled by various religions. This nationalism is the cloak of sanctity over the politics of hate. Sikhism knitted entire humankind into one universal family. He said a new orientation was required to build a unity out of divisions and out of rivalries. This requires radical change of outlook as propounded four centuries ago by compilation of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Bhai Harbans Lal, Chairman of the Academy, Guru Granth Studies, Texas, in his special lecture on 'World Peace Based on *Guru Granth*: Message of One Spirit One World' regretted that the world today failed to see *Guru Granth* as meant for all on account of the failures and selfishness of the present-day keepers and caretakers of the scripture. Guru Arjan and 35 other authors of the *Guru Granth Sahib* brought the *Granth* as a gift of divine wisdom to humanity.

Over five dozen scholars from India and abroad participated and presented their papers in the various sessions spread over three days of the conference. They included religious leaders, theologians, philosophers, scientists, doctors, social scientists, judges, lawyers, social workers, human right activists etc. During the conference a panel discussion in the form of Round Table Conference on the theme of 'Culture of Peace' was also held in which a large number of delegates and participants took part. An evening with Bhai Baldeep Singh and his world class associate, Sukhwinder Singh Pinki was also

arranged. It was exclusively for Gurbani music which brought to light the soul stirring experience of sacred music. Besides, scholars from India and abroad, delegations from Vatican led by Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, and from the Parliament of World Religions were received. Visitors from abroad were taken to Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. The delegates were guided by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon and Bhai Harbans Lal. They were received by S. Manjit Singh Calcutta, Honorary Secretary of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Giani Joginder Singh, Jathedar of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib.

Dr. Noël Q.King, USA; Dr. Davinder Singh Chahal, Canada; Dr. K.R.Abdullah, USA; Dr. Sangat Singh Saylee, USA; Dr. Daya Singh Sandhu, USA; Sardar Surain Singh Dhanoa, Canada; Dr. Balwant Singh Hansra, USA; Dr. Gurbaksh Singh, USA; Dr. Dirk Ficca, USA; Ms Diane Goldin, USA; Dr. Inderjit Kaur Khalsa, USA; S. Satijiwan Singh Khalsa, USA; Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, Vatican, and Father Felix Macado, Italy; Dr. Jasdev Singh Rai, U.K., were among the scholars from abroad who made presentations. Ms Elizabeth Espersen, USA, was unable to attend but her paper on '*Guru Granth Sahib* and Religious Tolerance' was distributed. There were several other scholars from European countries who were present but, due to time contingency, were able to participate only in the round-table discussion.

Scholars from every corner of India included Dr. Mukul Raj Mehta, Banaras; Dr. N. Muthumohan, Madurai; Dr. Kirpal Singh, Dr. Harnam Singh Shan, Major-Gen. Himmat Singh Gill, S. Gurdev Singh, Principal Gurbux Singh Shergill, Dr. Hardev Singh Virk, all from Chandigarh; Bhai Baldeep Singh, Dr. Mohinder Kaur Gill, Dr. Surjit Kaur Jolly, (all from Delhi); Dr. Rohini Punekar, Guwahati; Dr. Darshan Singh, Dr. Gurbhagat Singh, Dr. Gurnam Kaur, Dr. Balkar Singh, Dr. Sukhdial Singh, Dr. Nazar Singh, Dr. B. Sinha, Dr. Rajinder Kaur Rohi, all from

Panjabi University, Patiala; S. Bhagwant Singh Dilawari, Amarawati; S. Nanak Singh Nishter, Hyderabad; Major Ajeet Singh, Indore; S. Satnam Singh, Imphal; Prof. H.S. Chhabra, Dhanbad; Shivcharan Singh Dhesi, Bangalore; Dr. Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon, Dr. Rai Jasbir Singh, Dr. Sabinderjit Singh Sagar, Dr. Jasbir Singh Sabar, Dr. Shashi Bala, Dr. Gursharanjit Singh, Dr. Ranjit Singh Bajwa, Dr. Paramjit Singh Siddhu, Dr. Dharam Singh, Dr. Jatinder Pal Singh Jolly, Dr. Balwinder Arora, Dr. Jaspal Singh, Dr. Rajinder Kaur, Dr. Kashmir Singh, Dr. Harmohinder Singh Bedi, Dr. Iqbal Kaur, Dr. Gurnam Kaur Bedi, Dr. Manvinder Singh, S. Jogeshwar Singh, Sh. Pawan Kumar, S. Simarjit Singh, Dr. Sharan Arora, Dr. Bhagwant Kaur and S. Balwinder Singh Jorasingha, all from Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

Officials of the Parliament of World Religions (PWR) who attended the conference said that the Parliament would coordinate with Sikh institutions and various organizations for study and discussions on the message of oneness enshrined in the holy *Guru Granth Sahib*. This was disclosed by Mr. Howard Sulkin, Chairman of PWR Council who spoke in one of the sessions of the conference.

Dr. Balwant Singh Hansra, a board member of the PWR Council, said in view of the Quadri-centennial celebrations of the installation of the *Guru Granth Sahib* NRI Sikhs and the PWR had made an ambitious programme to make the event a big success. For the first time regular *langar* would be served at Barcelona, in Spain, to delegates of the fifth international conference of the PWR to be held from July 7-13, 2004. Bhai Harbans Lal said special musical concerts based on *Gurbani* and *Guru Granth Sahib* seminars which include speakers from all world religions are being proposed for the Barcelona Conference. To acquaint the thousands of delegates from all religions at the conference, the PWR is constituting two awards,

named as the Guru Tegh Bahadur Award for contributions to Promote Freedom of Religion and Bhai Ghaniaya Award for Promotion of Service to Humanity.

Major-Gen Himmat Singh Gill who chaired a session of the conference, said religious intolerance and the spread of fundamentalism in Asia and the Middle East and Europe had created an unsavory situation in the world. He said message of the *Guru Granth Sahib* should be imparted to humanity to bring peace in the world. Dr. Sukhdev Singh Sohal in his paper underlined the challenges to world bodies like U.N.O. in the present day world politics. Dr. Kashmir Singh highlighted the significance of *Guru Granth Sahib* as a juristic person. Dr. Balwinder Arora stressed upon the role of Women in World Peace in the context of Sikhism. Dr. Mohinder Kaur Gill pointed out that *Guru Granth Sahib* is the main authority for inter-religious discourse. Dr. Davinder Singh Chahal from Canada speaking on "Acceptability of Nanakian Philosophy in the Science Age" said although the Sikh theologians keep science and Nankian philosophy separate nevertheless, Nanakian philosophy was based on science and logic. He said Nanakian philosophy as included in the *Guru Granth Sahib* could become universally acceptable provided it was preached scientifically and logically. Dr. N. Muthu Mohan in his lecture on "The Theme of Dialogue and Justice in the *Guru Granth Sahib*" was of the view that dialogue and justice were very fundamental and interwoven themes, which were dealt with not only at the empirical level but are also achieved fundamentally in the philosophy.

Dr. Kirpal Singh, an eminent historian from Chandigarh, delivering his presidential lecture in one of the sections said one of the fundamentals of inter-faith understanding was the recognition of efficacy of other faiths and *Guru Granth Sahib* recognized that all religious dispensations were capable of

elevating the human soul. He said that the emphasis of the Gurus was on creating communal understanding with the assertion that the essence of true religion consisted of love of God and good conduct. Dr. Nanak Singh Nishter from Hyderabad opined that *Guru Granth Sahib* had played a significant role to unite Hindus and Muslims for co-existence. Prof. Noel Q. King, prominent theologian and historian from USA, said the basic tenets of Guru Nanak's faith were revelation of one God and his Oneness. Dr. Daya Singh Sandhu, a prominent social psychologist from USA, said that teachings of *Guru Granth* are the sine quanon for interfaith understanding.

Dr. Gurbhagat Singh presented his paper on *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as a Utopia for Humankind. Dr. Darshan Singh from Punjabi University, Patiala in his paper emphasized that Guru Nanak is 'Apostle of Religio-Social Good Will and Amity'. Dr. Gurnam Kaur stressed on the salient features of Inter-faith Dialogue in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Prof. Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon from Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar said that Humanism of *Guru Granth Sahib* is a pathway to World Peace. S. Gurdev Singh I.A.S. (Retd.) presiding over a session remarked that *Guru Granth Sahib* inspires for action to ameliorate the sufferings of humankind. Dr. Rohini Puneekar brought to light the Bhakti Poems of Chokhamela of Maharashtra. Prof. Harnam Singh Shan dwelt on *Guru Granth Sahib's* contribution to World Peace and harmony. S. Bhagwant Singh Dilawari stressed upon the role of *Guru Granth Sahib* to nurture the idea of religious tolerance and universal brotherhood. Dr. Shashi Bala dwelt on the multi-dimensional aspect of peace as propounded in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Dr. Nazar Singh brought forth some early western efforts to understand the Sikhs through the medium of Bani. Dr. Balkar Singh presented that *Guru Granth Sahib* provides model for universal consciousness. Dr. Inderjit Kaur (U.S.A.) underlined

the universality of *Sabad Guru*.

Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald, President of the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, Vatican (Rome), stressed the need for comparative study of religions. To him there were many themes in the Bible which were shared in *Guru Granth Sahib*. He also talked about the Christian-Sikh dialogue for creating permanent peace in the world while delivering his presidential address at the valedictory function. Dr. Jagdev Singh Rai of the Sikh Human Rights Group said *Guru Granth Sahib* promotes pluralism. It further encourages rationalism but also brings home the limits of human logic.

The conference concluded with Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Director of the conference reading a declaration prepared by the attending scholars at the end of the conference. He said that the *Guru Granth Sahib* inspires the people to work for all-round development of society. The galaxy of religious scholars who participated in the three-day international conference was of the unanimous view that this holy scripture of the Sikhs is a strong votary of inter-faith understanding and peaceful co-existence. The message of the Sikh Gurus, as enshrined in the Sikh Scripture, inspires the whole humankind to eradicate evil from all walks of life.

The proceedings of the earlier two international conferences on *Guru Granth Sahib* have already been published by the University. This volume includes the papers which were presented in English at the Third International Conference. Over two dozen papers which were written in Punjabi and Hindi will be published later on. The papers included in this volume cover a wide spectrum. Broadly speaking they focus on the Sikh perspective of interfaith understanding and its relevance for world peace. They discuss various dimensions of the message of *Guru Granth Sahib* which have direct bearings on the interfaith understanding and world peace. It is hoped, in a

communally surcharged and racially divided atmosphere especially when we are on the brink of clash between civilizations, these papers would give a lesson or two to the world community to tread the path of peace and harmony in the light of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

I will be failing in my duty if I donot express my gratitude to our Vice-Chancellor, Dr. S.P. Singh, who took personal interest to host the conference and provide every help and patronage to present these papers in the book form. I am also thankful to S. Jagjit Singh Walia, Director Press and Publication for taking care of the job to get this volume published.

Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon

Presidential Address

His Excellency, Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University,
Amritsar
and Governor of Punjab, Justice O.P. Verma (Retd.)

Professor S.P. Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; Professor Satinder Singh, Pro V.C. of this University; the keynote speaker of the Conference, Honourable Justice Mota Singh, Queen's Court, England; Prof. Jai Rup Singh, Dean Academic Affairs; Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Director of the Conference, distinguished delegates, members of the various faculties of this University and honourable guests and dear students, I am much pleased to be here with you all today at this Third International Conference on *Guru Granth Sahib and Inter-faith Understanding to World Peace*. This is a part of a series of International Conferences initiated a couple of years before in connection with the world-wide celebrations of 400th year of compilation and installation of *Guru Granth Sahib* at Harimandir Sahib. It is significant to keep this in mind that the Guru Nanak Dev University, named after the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, happens to be at the same sacred city of Amritsar where the mission of the founder of Sikhism practically culminated in the form of the holy Sikh Scripture, the *Adi Granth*.

Significantly, the tradition of inter-religious dialogue was originated by Guru Nanak himself. He had lengthy discourses with his contemporary Saints and Sufis, scholastic exponents and practitioners of other faiths. In this way, the first Sikh Master envisioned a pluralist type of inter-faith dialogue as a key to dissolve the rigidities of the religious exclusiveness and

the concomitant religious antagonism to bring about inter-faith understanding as well as peace and harmony.

To give practical shape to the ideals of his predecessors as well as other contributors of the sacred Sikh Scripture, the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, compiled it in 1604 A.D. It is a *sui generis* scripture in the world. It serves as a guide to the path of peace for humanity. One of its greatest glories is its catholic character. It was compiled with a view to affirm the fundamental unity of all religions and the unitary character of all experience. It contains a comprehensive world-view as it offers a perfect set of values and a practical code of conduct. It is indeed the complete teacher. Hence it is a unique scripture among the source books of religions. Its contents are spiritual poetry, the vision of the cosmic order and exhortation to higher life. An eminent scholar of International stature, Arnold Toynbee, has very rightly stated the high merit of the Sikh Scripture in the following words :

Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen; the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scripture, the *Adi Granth*, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions whose relations have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury.

(*Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*,
Foreword, pp. 10-11)

The sacred Sikh Scripture contains the *bani* of the Sikh Gurus as well as the Sufi Saints and medieval Bhaktas. Its message of Oneness of God and universal brotherhood of mankind serves as a model for inculcating communal harmony and world peace. It is structured on the basis of inter-faith dialogue and spiritual elevation of living beings. Even more

than this, its message of love and peace continues to inspire the generations to come.

Moreover, the significance of *Guru Granth Sahib* in the present scenario seems to be much more than its being as a Guru and spiritual guide to the Sikhs. It is a unique document on contemporaneous socio-religious milieu, cultural moorings and ethos. It also reflects composite culture germinating in this region from the praxis of universal brotherhood. Its essence revolves around humanism and religious tolerance. Furthermore, it remains as a beckon amidst the socio-economic inequalities of the mundane world, thus propounded by Guru Nanak Dev Ji : 'Abide pure amidst the impurities of this world'. As Sikhism is a religion of integration of Spiritual and temporal, it embodies the idea of social responsibility, hard labour and selfless service. Society based on these ideals is the need of the hour. The scholars deliberating in the Conference would have a threadbare discussions and analyses of these lofty ideas and insights. Still, there may be much more to be looked into and imbibed at.

I would like to conclude by extending thanks to the University for giving me this opportunity to address to the august gathering assembled to deliberate on such a profound theme *Guru Granth Sahib and Inter-faith Understanding to World Peace*. The Conference is hoped to deliberate the Sikh perspective of inter-faith understanding, its relevance towards World Peace and may highlight various aspects of the thought of the Sikh Gurus as well as other contributors of the Sikh Scripture. The learned deliberations may further help to formulate an effective programme to achieve the noble objective of the conference, i.e. to re-discover and re-interpret the essentials of Sikhism enshrined in *Guru Granth Sahib* in the context of the 21st century. I wish that all the participants would enrich our understanding of the sacred Sikh Scripture and its message, the need of which is becoming more and more essential in these turbulent times.

I wish the deliberations of the Conference all success.

Keynote

H.H. Justice Mota Singh*

When I examined the list of all the distinguished people who are participating in this Conference, I quailed at my own temerity in daring to join them. I am as conscious of their great scholarship, learning and erudition as I am, Mr Chairman, of my own imperfections and shortcomings. And I am reminded of an American Attorney, who has a large fish in a glass case in his office in New York. And the legend underneath reads "I Would not be here If I had kept my big mouth shut."

It is palpably obvious that the theme of this Conference could not have been more carefully or more thoughtfully chosen. World peace is a topic that has exercised the minds of a lot of leaders, political leaders, the world over, for years. Religious leaders have, by and large, either remained silent or been sidelined as inconsequent. To couple the idea of world peace with the celebration of the 400th year of the installation in the Harimandir Sahib of the Scripture of the world's youngest religion is testimony to the depth of concern as well as understanding on the part of the organisers of the Conference.

A.N. Wilson, a writer in England who writes on religious matters, begins his tract "*Against Religion*" with the following words :

"It is said in the Bible that the love of the money is the root of all evil. It might be truer to say that the love of God is the root of all evil. Religion is the tragedy of mankind. It appeals to all that is noblest, purest, loftiest in the human spirit, and yet there scarcely exists a

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religion which has not been responsible for wars, tyrannies and the suppression of truth."

No religious leader takes that proposition lightly. We know that religion kills. But so does the absence of religion. People have killed in the name of God. But their crimes do not rival the crimes of those who have killed believing they were gods. The greatest crimes of the last century, those of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, were committed by secular regimes. And one is reminded of the force of the words of Abraham, 'I said to myself, "There is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me."

Ladies and Gentlemen, ours is a bewildered, tormented generation. It would not, in my view, be an overstatement to say that mankind is, today, in the midst of one of the greatest crises in history.

Our predicament is due to the lack of adjustment of the human spirit to the startling developments in science and technology. In spite of the fact that the great scientific inventions have liberated us from servitude to nature, we seem to suffer from a type of neurosis, from cultural disintegration. Science has relieved us of grinding poverty, mitigated the tortures of physical pain, yet we suffer from an inward loneliness. It seems to me that the whole world is suffering from scepticism in faith, anarchy in morals; and we do not know which way to turn and what to do. There is a certain duplicity in human nature, which makes us do things even when we recognise them to be wrong. When Pontius Pilate pronounced Jesus innocent and yet handed him over, he did what we all do, say one thing and do another. Our generation had the responsibility for deciding whether we are to prosper or decline, whether our conduct will lead to a beginning or to an end. Unless we model our lives on the principles and precepts we profess, we cannot expect others to follow these implicitly. We do not tire of reminding others of these principles but we are among the first to violate them, and we do so with impunity because that suits our immediate

purpose. We merely observe the trappings of religion, that gestures of faith and the conventions of piety; our actions do not match our words. We conceal from ourselves and from others the nature of what we do by euphemism. We must strip away all pretence and be honest with ourselves. That is the only way to regain faith in decency.

Sensitive and informed minds believe that the fundamental need of the world, far deeper than any social, political or economic readjustment, is a spiritual reawakening, a recovery of faith. Great movements of spirit arise when despair at the breakdown of civilisation makes the mind susceptible to the recognition of the insufficiency of the existing order and the need for rethinking its foundations and shifting its bases. Man cannot live and work without the hope that humanity is really capable of rising to a higher moral plain, without the dream that, in the end, he and his fellow mortals will be reconciled and will understand one another. There exist bonds as well as barriers between individuals and nations. But mankind's highest destiny is to become more humane, more spiritual, more capable of sympathetic understanding. This hope rises strong in the human heart in periods like the present, when confusion and horror are abroad.

Human societies like human beings live by faith and die when faith disappears. If our society is to recover its health, it must regain its faith. Our society is not sick beyond saving for it suffers from divided loyalties, from conflicting urges, from alternating moods of exaltation and despair. This condition of anguish is our reason for hope. We need a faith which will assert the power of the spirit over things and find significance in a world in which science and organisation seem to have lost their relationship to traditional values. The world is today, a madhouse where individuals exaggerate their racial superiority, religious pride or national egotism and thus become the victims of moral and spiritual blindness. If violence, which is a cowardly escape from the rule of reason, is rampant, the answer

to it is in the growth of decency and compassion. We have to view the world as one whole, a single community, a fellowship of human beings who have the same instincts and fellow feeling, the same faith in the Unseen.

Though we know the world is one, whether we like it or not, and that, in spite of political, national and racial divisions, the fortunes of everyone of us are linked to those of other—seven though we know that, we do not feel it in our bones. We are not only bewildered but also alarmed when we find that people or nations are not ready to change their ways of dealing with others and persist in ways which are outmoded and even dangerous. The world has, perhaps, been brought together rather too suddenly and this enforced intimacy has intensified the differences and increased the possibilities of friction. We are baffled by the problems which our age has thrown up. Our needs and problems are of the 21st century. Our loyalty should be to humanity as a whole. We must not allow nationalist allegiances to disrupt the spiritual unity of the world. We must cast off pride and egoism, individual and collective. Don't forget, Providence has a way of teaching those who persist, long and wilfully, in ignoring great realities, the dignity of man, the sense of human equality and the right of all people to freedom. We need today a sense of humility. We should give up the attitude that we are right and our opponents wrong or the attitude that we know we are not perfect but we are certainly better than our opponents.

We should develop a heart and a conscience, a feeling that we are all members of a brotherhood that knows no race or class. Sikhism seeks to knit entire mankind into one universal brotherhood—“*Ek Pita, Ekas Ke Hum Barak*”. Mankind has stemmed from one root, though it is split up into different communities. It is now striving for recovery of its basic unity and the reconciliation of different cultures. All men possessing wisdom and virtue are of one family. All good men are of one family; the only foreigners are the wicked. I said that if our

society is to regain its health, it must regain its faith.

The greatest danger facing humanity after the collapse of secular ideologies is religious-fuelled nationalism; the cloak of sanctity over the politics of hate. We have seen the rise of racism, xenophobia and right-wing nationalism throughout Europe. We have seen neo-Nazism resurgent in a united Germany. And we have seen bloody ethnic war ravaging what was once Yugoslavia. The mood in world politics is dark, darker than the world has ever known. What makes it worse is that in many cases what has risen to the surface are not new grievances but old, and we thought long-buried, animosities : ethnic rivalries that had been dormant for decades. Ogden Nash, once said, "No man ever forgets where he buried the hatchet." He was right. Prejudice is like a virus that can be frozen into suspended animation, but once unfrozen, it remains as virulent as ever. Far from being called into question by recent events, the importance of interfaith and inter-racial understanding can hardly be overstated. To put it bluntly, if religion is part of the problem, then religion must be part of the solution. Violence and vengeance blaspheme the name of God in an age in which God is calling on us not to destroy the world He made. If conflicts between followers of different religions, say, between Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and others, have been fuelled by the clash of faiths, then it must be the leaders of those faiths who rise above the conflicts and say: in the name of God, Stop ! If we were once oppressed, we cannot become oppressors. And if we once cried for help and no one came, we cannot stand idly by when others cry for help. There are some evils which, because they are crimes against humanity, implicate us all. We are sometimes morally responsible for what we fail to prevent, as well as for what we do. The Chief Rabbi in the United Kingdom says in one of his books—"For too long the great monotheisms—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—have sanctioned suspicion and hostility to the outsider, the one who is not of our people or our faith. That hostility costs lives even

today between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, between Christians and Muslims in Bosnia, and between Muslims and Jews in the Middle East. Even today," he goes on to say, "theology drives anti-Semitism in Poland and fuels the policies of what critics called fundamentalism. I do not like this word because it groups together many different phenomena under a single name. But several things followed and have become more and more noticeable over the passing years. First, religion, far from being a force of reconciliation, has become the battleground of some of the fiercest and most intractable conflicts in the contemporary world. Secondly, the kind of religion that has real power over the lives of its followers is increasingly exclusive and confrontational. Thirdly, the theology that speaks of tolerance and openness and dialogue with the modern world is seen, by many believers in search of the truth, as a compromise that lacks content and authenticity. The result is that the most passionate-religious believers today in many faiths, are more concerned with their own destiny than with our collective destiny in this tense and troubled world. But the Bible teaches today, as it has always taught, that our common humanity precedes our particular faiths, and that the ethnic outside is in God's image even if he or she is not in our image. To put it simply", says the Chief Rabbi, "crimes against humanity are not crimes against humanity alone. They are crimes against God, even when—especially when—they are committed in the name of God. We have great difficulty in recognising the integrity—indeed the sanctity—of those who are not in our image, whose faith and traditions and culture and language are not like ours. Nonetheless, we are told we must struggle to see that the wholly other, he or she who is not in our image, is yet in God's image. For if we are to co-exist in a world of rising religious intolerance, we shall have to find an interfaith imperative that speaks not only with a still small voice, but also out of heart of the whirlwind." He went on to say "the time has come for religious leaders of all faiths to alert the

world to what is at stake.”

Risk demands courage and courage needs faith. At the heart of our faith is a faith in peace. The faith of the Sikh Gurus leaves no room for other ways of serving God. A faith is like a language. I am at home in my own language as I am at home in my own faith. But I am not compromised by the existence of other languages.

There are times when we scale the heights of goodness. But there are times when we descend into the depths of evil. Creation testifies not merely to God's power but also, as it were, to His belief in mankind. At the heart of religion is not just the faith we have in God. No less significant is the faith God has in us. That faith is surely often tested. It is tested when we turn our back on God. It is tested no less when we commit evil in His name. Yet, He does not lose faith that one day we will learn this—that God has given us many universes of faith but only one world in which to live.

While I am not compromised by the existence of other faiths, I believe that the Sikh religion is uniquely placed to bring about that communion, that brotherhood of man, to build a bridge between different religions in the interest of world peace. The Guru is a messenger of God sent to enlighten mankind. God is not limited to any one incarnation but sends His messengers from time to time, to lead struggling humanity towards Him. It is the law of the spiritual world that whenever evil and ignorance darken human affairs, morality and wisdom will come to our rescue. The Guru, as I said, is a messenger of God sent to enlighten mankind....Now, you may think that is too bold a claim to make on behalf of the youngest religion in the world. I hope that by the time I have finished, you will be satisfied that I have made good that claim. “*Satgur Nanak Pragatiaa, Miti Dhundh Jag Chaanan Hoaa.*” When the sun rises, the stars become invisible and darkness comes to an end, so with Guru Nanak's appearance on the world-stage, ignorance and darkness were dissipated. Wherever the Guru set foot, that

place became a place of pilgrimage or place of worship. His words were to liberate the people coming from the four directions: his message was spread throughout the nine continents. There is hardly a prayer in our liturgy that does not end with a plea for peace and the welfare of all humanity. A person's religion is an important indicator of personal and social well being. At a time when many people believe in the triumph of secularism, more people than we may suppose are content simply to believe. Simple faith is far from extinct in today's cynical climate, and fundamental religious conviction survives in a society conditioned by scientific values and moral scepticism. But religion which lives in the outer threshold of consciousness without conviction in the mind or love in the heart is utterly inadequate. It must enter into the structure of our life, become part of our being. "He alone knows the truth who knows all living creatures as himself."

The Sikh religion is the youngest of world religions. And, according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year 1994*, it is the fifth largest religion in the world after Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. It is a revealed religion and not an offshoot of one faith or a syncretic blend of different and often conflicting faiths. But it is not a proselytising religion. We do not seek to convert others. We do not need to do that. There are, in our teachings, very firm doctrinal bases for co-operation with all religions and cultures. The moral responsibility, stress on self-respect and sense of honour, insistence on right conduct, concern for the welfare of others and co-existence with other religions and cultures are the prerequisites for spiritual life and individual salvation. Regrettably, that can not be said of some other religions, some of which are more aggressive in their efforts at conversion. They consider it a divine duty. Those who sponsor religious propaganda in their zeal for the spiritual welfare of their fellowmen indulge in a vulgar competition about the know-how of salvation. Agencies for proselytisation which scramble

for souls are not in keeping with the true spirit of religion. There are still people who, with a crusading zeal, affirm that they have the monopoly of a final, unique, exclusive and incomparable revelation. These people are indirectly responsible for the eclipse of religion, for the blight of unbelief in large parts of the world. I hope that I do not tread on any toes, religious or otherwise, when I say that it was Sikhism that raised its voice in protest against empires because imperialism and its latter-day successors, totalitarianism and fundamentalism, are attempts to impose a single truth on a plural world, to reduce Men to Man, cultures to a single culture, to eliminate diversity in the name of single socio-political order. We Sikhs believe in religion as communion with God and do not dismiss differences among religions as unimportant or irrelevant. We do not propose an undifferentiated universalism or indifferentism. We believe in partnership among religions. We believe that all human beings are of the same essence and, therefore, of equal worth and entitled to the same fundamental rights—that the human individual is the highest, most concrete embodiment of the spirit on earth and anything that hurts his individuality or damages his dignity is morally wrong.

I believe that man has to come to terms with outside nature and with himself. That is the condition of his survival. All religions proclaim as their goal the unification of humanity. This has taken place in the physical or geographical sense, but our minds and hearts are yet to be prepared for the acceptance of this oneness of humanity. A new orientation is required to build a unity out of the divisions of races and peoples, out of the rivalries of nations and conflicts of religion. This requires a courageous effort and a radical change of outlook. We have to protect the enduring substance of religion from the forms and institutions, which suffer from the weakness of man and the compulsion of time.

Arnold Toynbee writes, "I was brought up to believe that Christianity was a unique revelation of the whole truth. I have

now come to believe that all the historic religions and philosophies are partial revelations of the truth in one or other of its aspects. In particular, I believe that Buddhism and Hinduism (and I would add, Sikhism) have a lesson to teach. Christianity, Islam and Judaism in the 'one world' into which we are now being carried by the 'annihilation of distance'. Unlike the Judaic religions, the Indian religions are not exclusive. They allow for the possibility that there may be alternative approaches to the mystery of Existence; and this seems to me more likely to be the truth than the rival claims of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to be the unique and final revelations. For each of us, the easiest approach to the mystery of the Universe is, no doubt, his ancestral religion; but this does not mean that he ought to rule out the other approaches that the other religions offer. If one can enter into these as well as into one's own, it is gain, not loss." And in commenting upon the Granth Sahib, he said, "The Guru Granth Sahib is remarkable for several reasons. Of all the known religious scriptures, this is the most highly venerated. It means more to Sikhs than even the Quran means to Muslims, the Bible to Christians and the Torah to Jews. The Guru Granth Sahib is the Sikh's perpetual Guru (Spiritual Guide). In this coming religious debate, the Sikh Religion and its scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world."

Let me remind you of what some others have said about our religion.

Tagore—Guru Nanak's noble religious ideology gave birth to a great nation of Sikhs whose greatness is reflected in their character and face.

Gokul Chand Narang—Guru Granth Sahib in Punjab saved the Hindus from spiritual starvation and prevented them from crossing over religious boundaries from which their return was impossible.

Miss Pearl S Buck (American)—The hymns in Guru Granth Sahib are an expression of man's loneliness, his

aspirations, his longing, his cry to God and his hunger for communication with that Being. I have studied the scriptures of other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find in *Granth Sahib*. It speaks to me of life and death, of time and eternity, of the temporal human body and its need, of the mystic human soul and its longing to be fulfilled. And finally.

Sir Mohammad Iqbal—India was once again blessed by God with Guru Nanak, possessed of all attributes of a prophet, a complete and perfect human being. Guru Nanak's appearance in the world was no less than that of Prophet Abraham 5000 years ago.

I said a little while ago that human societies like human being live by faith and die when faith disappears. We are living in a period of disintegration of faith and growing disillusionment about the traditional values which have come down to us. Worldly considerations seem to be corrupting the great ideals. We only pay lip service to these ideals. If we are to recover our health, we must regain our faith. The root evil in human history is pride. According to Greek poets, Hubris, the insolence of pride, is the root of all tragedy, personal as well as national. It is the nemesis of pride that brought down the Pharaohs of Egypt, the rulers of Greece, the emperors of Persia. Only the arrogant believe that they have enough wisdom and virtue to rule the rest. The pride, which apes humility, is most dangerous.

We need a sense of true humility. We should give up the attitude that we are right and our opponents wrong. If we want to convert our opponent, it does not help to speak of his lower side, his defects and shortcomings. We must present to him his own higher and nobler side. Reason, not force, should govern our affairs. We should settle our differences by negotiation, discussion and reach decisions, which reconcile conflicting interests by a process of mutual give and take. There will then emerge, out of the turmoil and trouble, a new order based on moral principles and spiritual values which will

draw people together.

Ladies and Gentleman, society means a community of ideas; without shared ideas on politics, morals and ethics no society can exist. Each one of us has ideas about what is good and what is evil, they cannot be kept private from the society in which we live. If men and women try to create a society in which there is no fundamental agreement about good and evil they will fail; if, having based it on common agreement, the agreement goes, the society will disintegrate. For society is not something that is kept together physically; it is held by the invisible bonds of common thought. If the bonds were too far relaxed the members would drift apart. A common morality is part of the bondage. The bondage is part of the price of society; and mankind, which needs society, must pay its price. Society is a moral enterprise. We cannot live alone. But we cannot live together without conflicts. How we resolve those conflicts determines the quality of our lives as members of families and as citizens. A society could be constructed on the rule of law and justice, its rougher edges smoothed by an active sense of kinship and compassion. At the heart of such a society is a concept of the common good, meaning not that there is some ultimate good on which we all agree, but simply that we must learn to live together if we are to pursue any good at all, and that means at least some shared morality. The fact that we personally feel diminished by death and destruction tells us that we are still morally alive.

The moral fabric with which we clothe our children has grown threadbare. The holes have begun to show. We have bestowed on our children a culture of violence, ritually celebrated at football grounds and on films and videos. Our children experience violence as street culture, as male initiation, even as quasi-religious catharsis. No society can allow this and survive. Violence has victims, and they are usually the most vulnerable and innocent.

We have systematically dismantled our structures of

authority. Who, today, has survived our relentless iconoclasm ? Politicians, religious leaders and others have been mercilessly savaged until there is no one left whose word carries moral force. In the process, we have robbed our children of any credible model of who we would wish them to be. We have tolerated the collapse of the family. We have done so in the name of personal fulfillment, sexual liberty and the inalienable right to follow our desires. No abdication has had more fateful consequences. The unattached society of the past 30 years has been one of unparalleled personal freedoms. But it has also one of growing incivility and aggression, of exploitation and manipulation, of temporary alliances rather than enduring loyalties, of quick pleasures over lasting happiness. Morality matters. Not because we seek to be judgemental or self-righteous or pious. Not because we fondly recall an age when men were chivalrous, women decorous, sin discreet and all ranks of society knew their place. It matters no because we are fundamentalists, convinced that we alone possess the moral certainties which form the architecture of virtue. Morality matters because we cherish relationships and believe that love, friendship, work and even the casual encounter of strangers are less fragile and abrasive when conducted against a shared code of civility and mutuality.

Morality matters because we believe that there are other and more human ways of living than instinctual gratification tempered by regret. Morality matters because despite all fashionable opinions to the contrary, we remain moved by altruism. We are touched by other people's pain. Decency, charity, compassion, integrity, faithfulness, courage, just being there for other people, matter to us. They matter to us because we are human. These truths, undervalued for a generation, are about to become vital again, and not a moment too soon. Societies disintegrate from within more frequently than they are broken up by external pressures. There is disintegration when no common morality is observed and history shows that

the loosening of moral bonds is often the first stage of disintegration, so that society is justified in taking the same steps to preserve its moral code as it does to preserve its government and other essential institutions. Without shared codes of conduct there can be no stable human institutions. Without a willingness to forego personal advantage for the sake of larger ends, there can be no collaborative endeavour, no academic fellowship, no business partnership, no lasting families, no civic society. Morality is the institution which defines and makes sense of the limits by which our behaviour is bound. The more we become aware of the dangers of limitless freedom, the more as we will search for moral rather than mere technical guidance. Moral codes, for long seen as repressive barriers to individual fulfillments, will come to be recognised for what they always were—the language of relationship and the precondition of trust. When that happens we will begin to renew the covenant which turns competing strangers into the shared enterprise that we call society.

Ladies and Gentleman, Sikh spiritual tradition is not content with mere toleration. There can be no goodwill or fellowship when we only tolerate each other. Many thinkers rebuke the habit of condescending toleration. We must appreciate all faiths, recognise that they offer rich spiritual experiences, and encourage sacrificial living and inspire their followers to a nobler way of life. The Sikh Gurus had this noble quality of appreciation of whatever was valuable in other religious traditions. The Saints, the Seers, the Avatars, the Nabis belong to the whole world. They are universal men who free our minds from bigotry and superstition, dogma and ritual and emphasis the central simplicities of religion. The great Seers of the world are the guardians of inner values, who correct the blind fanaticism of the superstitious followers. The more we understand one another, the more we feel that we are like one another. But it is important to realise that we cannot live by instinct, habit or emotion. We need a rational faith to sustain a

new order of life and rescue us from our mental fag and spiritual anxiety. The principles which are an integral part and are, at the same time, a spiritual and existential leap of entire mankind provide, in my submission, all the answers.

Sikhism is not a religion of passive spectators. It is not a static of dormant discipline, nor it ever was. It advocates active participation in the process of human evolution. It is a religion with a message of hope and optimism. For 200 years from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh it remained in a state of continuous flux and development. Now, 300 years after Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhism continues to grow and wrestle with new issues that engage it—from ecology, peace and disarmament, gender and racial discrimination to the population explosion, reproductive rights and AIDS—matters which affect us all. Sikhism provides the Sikh with a highly developed, structured sense of ethics so that individually and collectively, he can make responsible choices in all matters.

There can be no doubt that a disciplined life, an organised life, a life lived in accordance with stated rules, is infinitely better, more productive, more secure, more satisfying, than an undisciplined life, a disorganised life and a life bereft of rules and direction. And you do not need me to tell you of the fate of a person who acquires the reputation of being disloyal, untrustworthy and untruthful. A disciplined life evokes implicit faith, trust and loyalty and respect.

The preaching and teachings of the Sikh Masters embody the whole truth that is relevant to the highest spiritual and cultural development of entire mankind. That means that Sikhism possesses the key to the happiness and peaceful co-existence of the entire human race. It is, as I have said, a religion with a message of hope and optimism. Adherence to its principles and teachings will, I believe, prevent a clash of civilisations. The brief history of Sikhism is a story of an inexorable fight in the cause of righteousness. It has demonstrated an extraordinary penchant for surviving in the

most hostile environment. Every one knows how Guru Gobind Singh created a mighty force of self-respecting, dauntless, brave and disciplined Sikhs, the Khalsa—a powerful body (ordained by God) which, in loyalty and courage, was to struggle against overwhelming odds, survive the cruellest of persecutions and ultimate rise to supremacy on the ruins of the Moghul Empire. It was a body with a resolve of steel but a saintly temperament, dedicated to the defence of righteousness, devout and committed to the good of humanity. How Guru Gobind Singh shook, out of their lassitude, people reconciled for long to their fallen state, their will to action completely atrophied, is one of the miracles of history. "Grant me this boon, Oh Lord that I may never be deterred from doing righteous acts," said Guru Gobind Singh. Is it any wonder when I say that Sikhism holds every promise of being religion of the world.

Sikhism believes in One and only God for the whole of mankind. It is fiercely, passionately, unwaveringly monotheistic. How relevant that concept is in the present day and age can be judged from the fact of raging bloody crusades between the Sematic religions, each advocating belief in one God, each believing that man is made in the image of God, but each serving, apparently, distinct and mutually exclusive "One God"—neither being prepared to accept the other because the other is not in its own image.

Then there is the absence of a formal priesthood or any form of brokerage between God and his creation. There are no intercessors between God and man. Sikhism believes in direct access to God through the scripture written in the vernacular and therefore accessible to all. We do not subscribe to the proposition "You can only come to God through me." The rejection of monasticism and stress on family life and community obligations; the concept of the saint soldier, the well-rounded individual; the abhorrence of the multi-tiered caste system; the demolition of every traditional excuse used to perpetuate gender bias; the great message of emancipation from

invidious discrimination and caste prejudices which was instilled in the hearts of the people, through institutions of *sangat* (congregation assemblies for worship) and *pangat* (line of devotees seated on the floor for a meal from the community kitchen); the three pillars of Sikhism—prayer (*naam japna*), Work (*kirat karni*) and charity (*wand chhakna*); the balance of the spiritual with the temporal (*miri-piri*); the cultivation of the art of eternal optimism (*charhadi kala*); the aspiration of wisdom, grounded in humility; and the ultimate goal of equipoise in every aspect of life—all these elements constitute a religion of the people and for the people. Charity, worship and hard-work are the ethical conduct of life.

In a world still reeling under the concept of inequality of sexes, Sikhism was the first religion to proclaim equality of women. "Why belittle one who gives birth to kings and saint," said, Guru Nanak. In the United Kingdom, the Church is still arguing whether women should be ordained as priests. So much so that, more recently, as many as 350 churches resolved that the Archbishop of Canterbury would not be invited to preach in them. Catholic Church just will not countenance women priests. Our Gurus proclaimed that women have an equal right to spiritual development as well as to impart religious instructions. That is what development as well as to impart religious instruction. That is what the Gurus bequeathed to the world, that is our heritage which I submit, provides the answers to the world's ills, but which is in danger of being subsumed into another religion if we do not pay heed now. It may already be too late to redeem some; all the more reason that we should be relentless in our efforts to save those we can.

May I emphasise that for us, the Sikhs, the rules of conduct laid down by our Gurus are immutable. It is not for us to seek to change them or re-write them according to intellectual or political fashion or such considerations, or dispense with them because we feel that their observance is proving to be irksome or inconvenient. We could not re-write or modify the rules, let

alone not observe them, and remain good Sikhs. The Sikhs has a unique relationship with the Guru. A sacred bond exists between the Sikh and the Guru—a covenant—"You undertake to observe the *maryada* and I will undertake to look after you." Yet the Sikh does not worship the Guru Nanāk or Guru Gobind Singh. Worship only the immaculate, Infinite one, who is never born and never dies and is subject to no human calculations or formulations—so said the Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh established the Guru Granth as the repository of all spiritual authority. The *bani* in the Granth Sahib is God's word, uttered through the mouths of the Sikh Gurus, I suggest that the survival of civilisation may ultimately depend upon the survival of three things—faith, the family and the community. They are mutually linked. When one breaks down, the others are weakened. It is no use shaking our fists at the stars; the fault lies with us.

May I interpose here and address a few words to my own community ?

The need of the hour is for enlightened men with a clear vision, men of discipline, steeped in the *maryada*, men with a spiritual depth, not uncaring bigots; above all, men of moral courage who will stand like a rock, who will speak to our deep instinct that there is more to life than self-indulgence, personal power or position that modern culture seems not only to aspect and condone but encourage, men who understand the community's problems, anxieties, needs and predilections, men who are alive to the challenges to the community and have the ability and courage to articulate its concerns and its aspirations, and men who will set their faces like flint against any fissiparous tendencies; men with the ability to identify and define the goal for the community and give imaginative, decisive leadership and not dither or quarrel among themselves. I have referred to the disintegration of faith and growing disillusionment about the traditional values which have come down to us. Many pernicious practices against which our Gurus revolted have

crept into Sikh society. Worldly considerations are corrupting the great ideals. The barrier which the Gurus laboured to cast down have been recreated. Our society is more caste-ridden now than at any other time in history. We pay lip-service to these ideals. We merely observe the trappings of religion, the gestures of faith and the conventions of piety. There is a difference between our belief and our behaviour; our actions do not match our words. If we strip away all pretence and are honest with ourselves, we will know that we are fast losing faith in decency. How different are we from the Sikhs envisaged by Guru Gobind Singh ?

We today face the challenge of destiny. We can meet that challenge and bring some order if, and only if, we follow implicitly the principles and teachings of our Gurus. These principles and teachings have been relegated to the limbo of forgotten things. It does not need much perspicacity to appreciate that the consequences of a failure to rise to that challenge are too serious to contemplate; they will be nothing short of calamitous. We shall ignore these at our peril. Loyalty to tradition does not mean imprisonment within it.

The Sikh religion is a world religion. In his classic study, *The Sikh Religion* (1910), Macauliffe says, "And we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system. The values taught by Guru Nanak are as relevant today as in the 15th century. The world today needs this faith of hope and optimism that preaches the welfare of all. The Sikhs owe it to the world to share their rich heritage with the rest of mankind." The Sikh religion is a religion of continuity. It depends for its very existence on the willingness of successive generations to hand on their faith and way of life to their children, and on the loyalty of children to the heritage of their past. By culture and upbringing we are, some of us, part of the liberal democracies of the West, but by birth each of us is heir to the history of our

ancestors and a destiny that joins our fate to theirs. There is difference between where we are and who we are. We are not wrong to see identity as a matter of birth. The fact that any of us is born a Sikh is no mere fact. It happened because generations of our ancestors decided to be Sikhs and hand on that identity to their children. The children of a nation are her capital, and in the proper investment of that capital consists her life and prosperity. Our youth are the raw material of the community. To train the youth of any free society, they must be taught not only one role, the obligations and rights of individuals, but their meaning and value for life.

If we want Sikhism to remain a world-religion, we should act now. The 300th anniversary in 1999 was an ideal a providential opportunity for us to make a start, to take stock, to indulge in a bit of introspection, to see how we, the present-day Sikhs, measure up to the vision that Guru Gobind Singh had of the Panth. It was a unique opportunity to galvanise the community into a cohesive community as envisaged by Guru Gobind Singh. Sadly, we missed that opportunity, And I ask, must we wait for catastrophes to happen, to bring us to our senses, to goad us into action ?

We now have another opportunity--the 400th year of the installation of Granth Sahib in Harimandir Sahib. But do not forget--we will only prove worthy of Guru's grace if we ensure that our deeds match our words, if we become Khalsa in thought, word and deed. The voice of the Gurus can still be heard asking us to shape our community and families as home for the divine presence. God seems to have been excluded by much of our present-day culture. But He exists where we let Him in. That is the call that beckons us. If we fail to answer the call, we will be answerable to our Gurus and to posterity.

God is mindful and ever-present because every human being has an immortal soul and is equally and infinitely precious in the sight of God. There could be no more blatant betrayal of

His love and purpose than for us. His creatures, to be indifferent to each other. To love our neighbour as ourselves is more than a duty, it is a manifestation of our loving relationship with Him. It is, however, a short step from loving one's neighbour to recognising that he or she has needs and interests, and a shorter step still to recognising that in our dealings with each other there are some basic and fundamental standards which human beings should observe and from which they should not depart. It is, I think, entirely consonant both with religion to respect and protect the unique importance of each individual human being. We learn from Genesis, God resolved to make man "in our image, after our likeness," and from literature that he is "the paragon of animals", "God's image," "Heaven's masterpiece". And from Granth Sahib--*Manas deh durlab hai*". To give practical expression to the belief that our fellow-creatures have not only needs but also rights is, surely, to advance God's purpose on earth. God makes every person in the same image. His image, and each is different. The supreme challenge is to see God's image in one who is not in our image. Our faith, the Sikh faith, declares the oneness of God and the plurality of men. We serve God, author of diversity, by respecting diversity. To those burdened with bigotry and bias, religion roared that all men were created equal. To those hemmed in by the horrors of hatred, religion revealed the blessings of brotherhood. To troubled souls trapped in transgression, stymied by sin, fearing that their failings would condemn their futures, religion promises that penitence would purge them of their past. I am a Sikh to my very bones and my Sikhism is my life. I trust that the same can be said of the faiths of my Hindu, Muslim, Jew and Christian brethren. But my Sikhism is only important in so far as it teaches me to love almighty God with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my might. And the only true test of my love for God is the degree to which I love His children. The ancient Jewish mystics taught that God is in hiding in our

world. The only way to find Him is to connect with His image in this world, our human brothers and sisters. The way to knowledge of God is through self-surrender. It is not ceremonial piety; it is something inward in the soul. Those who, in humility of a perfect self-surrender have ceased to cling to their own petty egos, are taken over by the superhuman Reality, in the wonder of an indescribable love.

The world's faiths must now become an actual force of peace and for the justice and compassion on which peace ultimately depends. That will require great courage and perhaps something more than courage—a candid admission that, more than at any time in the past, our need to search in each its own way—for a way of living with and acknowledging the integrity of those who are not of our faith. Behaviour and belief go together. If we believe in blood, race and soil, our world will be filled with Belsens. If we behave like wild animals, our society will be a jungle. If we believe in universal spiritual values, peace and understanding will grow. Peace, ladies and gentlemen, is not the mere absence of war; it is the development of a strong fellow-feeling, an honest appreciation of other people's ideas and values. Distinctions of a physical character diminish in importance as the understanding of the significance of the inner life of man increases. We need, not merely a closer contact between one another, but a closer union, a meeting of minds and union of hearts. Perfect compassion untouched by condescension, washed clean of pride, even of the pride of doing good, is the highest religious quality.

According to the Ecclesiastics "When the Holy One created the first man, he took him and led him round all the trees of the garden of Eden and said to him "Behold my works, how beautiful, how splendid they are. All that I have created, I created for you. Take care, therefore, that you do not destroy my world, for if you do, there will be no one left to repair what you have destroyed." Let me remind you of the prayer enshrined

in the words of Guru Amardas Ji :

Jagat Jalanda Rakh Le', Apni Kirpaa Dhaar

Jit Duaray ubre', Tite' le'hu ubaar

Save by Thy grace, the world is in flames save it, by whatever portal it may be saved the true Guru hath revealed the truth and so one reflects on his true word Saith Nanak—none other beside the Lord may liberation confer.

A former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Fisher, once declared, "For all I know it is within the Providence of God that the human race should destroy itself, with nuclear weapons." He said there was no evidence that the human race was to last for ever and there was plenty of evidence in the Christian scriptures to the contrary effect. When moral passions are armed with nuclear weapons, we have a frightful combination. The extinction of humanity will not be the result of impersonal forces or supernatural plans. If it happens, it will be the direct result of man's obstinacy and pride, hubris, undisciplined love of power which have made ugly many pages of history. Our distressed generation is obscurely aware that the present crisis is a spiritual one and what we need is a healing of the discord between outward resources of power which are assuming frightful proportions and the inward resources of spirit which seem to be steadily declining. To redeem and re-create our civilisations we need a recovery of spiritual awareness or posterity will not forgive us. Haying said that, there is no need to give up hope or lose faith. The new world of peace, freedom and safety for all can be achieved only by those who are moved by great spiritual ideals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the duty we owe our ancestors who died because of their faith is to build a world in which people no longer die because of their faith. We honour the past not by repeating it but by learning from it, by refusing to add pain to pain, grief to grief. That is why we must answer hatred

with love, violence with peace, resentment with generosity of spirit and conflict with reconciliation. In short, either we live together in peace as God's children, children of one Father, or we perish together. The choice is either extinction or human brotherhood. It cannot be left to the vagaries of chance.

Universalism of *Guru Granth Sahib*

Satinder Singh*

Guru Granth Sahib, Holy Spiritual Book, belongs not only to Sikh Religion but also to the faith of Humanity at large. It breaks itself from all the communal shackles and disseminates the message of love, brotherhood and peace applicable to all the religious communities of the whole world. *Guru Granth Sahib* is a great code of universalism that holds in its arms the total universal community.

Guru Granth Sahib is also the first interfaith scripture of the world. It is an epitome of dignity and respect for all the religious faiths as it showers recognition and honour on all of them. The only condition is that of truthfulness, genuineness and benevolence of heart.

Guru Granth Sahib proclaims (actually its nature is not proclamational) the non-sectarian ideology as well as its practice where everyone gets equal representation and recognition. In addition to the writings of the Sikh Gurus, it contains authentic and well preserved writings of many, Bhakats and Sufis belonging to different faiths, castes and regions covering the whole of India. The compilation and editing of *Guru Granth Sahib* is a unique and highly significant event in the history of India as well as of the whole of Asia and the World.

Guru Granth Sahib has a universal appeal and its philosophy is for the benefit and upliftment of the total human kind that is why one unique aspect of the daily prayer of a Sikh is to pray for *Sarbat Da Bhala* (Goodness/Benevolence for all), that is both happiness and peace for all since we all

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belong to one and only one Creator.

Universal message of *Guru Granth Sahib* for the welfare, respect and peace for all should not only reach every nook and corner of the world but should also enlighten all the wanting minds. The precious treasure of *Guru Granth Sahib's* enlightenment can definitely grant solace to the suffering humanity and give them courage to live in peace, contentment and social justice.

It is most significant and befitting occasion that the Department of Guru Nanak Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar is organizing a three-day International Conference on "Guru Granth Sahib and Interfaith Understanding to World Peace" to commemorate the Quadcentenary celebrations of the compilation and installation of *Guru Granth Sahib* at the Holy Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Amritsar. This unique effort, where many national and international scholars, in addition to teachers/ scholars from the Department and the University, are going to partake in its deliberations, shall pave the way for the communal harmony in the global society as well as for the real interfaith foundations laid and practiced by the Sikh Gurus. Today's world community which is suffering from all the contemporary maladies and the evils of life can whole-heartedly depend on the diligent value-system and the sagacious out-look and vision of *Guru Granth Sahib* for a healthy and peaceful living.

The scholars from different parts and walks of life who are joining here to deliberate on various aspects of the universalism of this Holy Scripture shall also bring out the ideas of Peace and Justice as enshrined in the *Bani* of *Guru Granth Sahib*. The gathering of a galaxy of scholars shall not only be a source of attraction and concern for the suffering humanity but shall also prove to be a beckon of light for the upliftment of the common and the down-trodden masses. *Guru Granth Sahib* has a mass appeal and is a centre of attraction for all, as it has a sound base of unique learning process and grants sublime recognition to learning and

teaching. It is highly empirical in nature and its whole thought and ideology is a natural outcome of real as well as actual living experiences.

Today's pluralistic, global and close-knit community requires guidance and help from the message of *Guru Granth Sahib* since it belongs to the wider global community as also towards the fulfilment of their hopes. It is undoubtedly a great source for providing much-wanted healing touch for this highly undergoing material world. *Guru Granth Sahib* is, undoubtedly, a Logos of the divine manifestation and is a great code of world civilization and universal religion and is globally relevant.

Guru Granth Sahib : Harbinger of World Peace

Balwant Singh Dhillon*

In the history of mankind religion has played a significant role to ameliorate the sufferings of the people. Besides eradicating evil, formation of healthy society has been the major concern of all the world religions. At the same time whether in the name of religion or due to some other reasons conflict and discord too has been a historical reality. It was widely believed that the end of cold war would usher in an era of amity where the idea of world-peace would turn into a reality. Contrarily distrust prevailing among various nations has estranged their relations to such a level that some of them are spending huge share of their meager resources on the mad race of armaments. Similarly escalation in racial, ethnic, regional and communal violence has been on the rise in different parts of the world. Undoubtedly, outbreak of violence in any form affects the atmosphere of amity and peace and resultantly development activities to mitigate the sufferings of the people are relegated to the background. The cult of violence whether supported by a group of people or by State can put a stop to the legitimate dissent in the civil society. Many local and international conflicts still abound. Millions of people carry deep-rooted grudges and are on the path of crusades or Jihads. Some of the weak tribes, nations and religious communities are tempted to take to terrorism and guerrilla warfare. The begrudged are so antagonized that they are embarking on suicide missions for their cause. The danger

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of clash between civilizations is looming large over the world community. The world community has often been in dilemma to react in a situation of unwanted aggression of one State against another as in the case of Palestine and Iraq in West-Asia or civil wars like those of Somalia in Africa and Bosnia in Eastern Europe. The role and relevance of World body, the UNO has increasingly become questionable and it has been under tremendous pressure to enforce its will on the member nations violating it. In the East the gospel of *Guru Granth Sahib* has responded to the issue of amity and peace in a very distinct manner which can be of global significance because it could help us move towards world peace.

The scholars of religious studies know well that Sikhism is one of the youngest faiths of the world religions. It was founded by Guru Nanak about five centuries ago when the Indian Sub-Continent was passing through a series of political turmoil coupled with sectarian animosities. Guru Nanak, whose sacred writings are enshrined in *Guru Granth Sahib* sang the message of unity of God and brotherhood and sisterhood of mankind. He reminded the followers of major creeds-Hinduism and Islam that all the humankind are offspring of the same Supreme Being, the Creator of all, though called variously. When a Muslim divine on his visit to Mecca, the holy of the holies of the Muslims, enquired on him whether Muslims are better or the Hindus, he replied very politely that devoid of good deeds both would be equally bad.

The Sikh Gurus were strong proponents of peaceful co-existence. *Guru Granth Sahib* exhorts people to be true to their respective faiths. It does not subscribe to exclusive claim on divine revelation. It believes that all paths lead to the same Supreme Being, Creator and Nurturer of all living beings. It teaches the path of equality of all human beings irrespective of their ethnicity, creed, class or sex. The Sikh shrines are open to Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike and anybody can join the congregation. Besides the hymns of the six Sikh Gurus, the *Guru Granth Sahib* contains the writings of medieval Hindu

Bhagats and Muslim Sufis of various castes and religions. Thus *Guru Granth Sahib* is epitome of catholicity, equality, tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

It is very significant to note that Sikh Gurus have never sought forced conversion. They denigrated use of State power aimed at seeking conversion from other faiths to swell the ranks of the religion of ruling class. They were against causing grief to anyone, least to talk of bloodshed. According to the *Guru Granth Sahib* every living being created by God is sacred. Naturally, it abhors wars as it brings unnecessary death and destruction to innocent civilians. However to submit meekly and to remain non-violent in all the situations finds no locus-standi in the Sikh theology. Resultantly at various stages of their history, Sikhs had to wage many battles against the Mughals, Afghans and British rulers. The Sikhs have strongly believed that war ought to be wage only in self-defence and in a righteous cause.

Loving devotion for God to earn His grace is creedal essence of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Its message underlines that salvation is the *sumum bonum* of human life. It exhorts that a living based on honest livelihood, service to mankind and truthful living are as essential as praying to earn God's grace to attain salvation. It preaches enmity to none and love to all. Thus for a Sikh loving human is loving God. In brief *Guru Granth Sahib* preaches universal love, the harbinger of peace.

The Sikh Gurus were aware of people's rights and obligations. They concede that lawful demands of a ruler must be fulfilled, as this is the only way to establish a natural relationship between the ruler and the ruled. They desired from the people that they should not become a party to evil social order. *Guru Granth Sahib* exhorts people to be courageous and fearless to proclaim the truth at an appropriate time. 'Fear not and frighten not' is the watchword of Sikh scripture. In that way people's right to criticism and defence has equally been asserted. The ruling class has been asked to be just with their subjects. For holding any office of authority

instead of hereditary claim, merit and competence should be the only considerations. These offices are not for self-aggrandisement but to serve the people.

Rapid exploitation of natural resources has polluted the environment to such an extent that even pure air and water are not available to millions of people. Ecological imbalance and pollution have put a question mark on the survival of humankind on this planet. Mother earth is crying for care. *Guru Granth Sahib* teaches to live in harmony with the nature. It disapproves moral laxity, instead it seeks to set highest standards of morality in public life. One feels sad when one sees abject poverty and immense disparities among the people even in this age of enlightenment. Millions of people die of hunger and diseases. In spite of material advancement family and social life are shattering, Spiritual values in public life are disappearing. Sikhism teaches that God loves only those who earn their livelihood by honest means and then share its fruit with the needy.

Baburvani is a testimony to Guru Nanak's strong condemnation of war and violence. Territorial rights of a country can not be usurped by any other country by pretext merely. Use of force for hegemonic designs or for imperialistic policy finds no validity in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The Sikh Gurus were very clear that aggressors must be resisted and State is morally bound to protect its people. Civilians may belong to any caste, class, creed or ethnicity, their life and property must not be harmed. The honour and modesty of women must be respected. The non-combatants should not become the target of warring armies. Interestingly, Sikhism's response to war is very much akin to the Christian doctrine of war formulated by St. Augustine. To participate in a war for peace is not an enigma for the Sikhs. It has been underlined that if war is totally unavoidable soldiers should not transgress the human values to perpetrate brutalities on the unarmed, innocent and defenceless people.

It is a reality that many local and international issues have

remained unresolved. The pent up feelings of the antagonized should be redressed. Just creating world coalitions will not end up terrorism. World bodies such as UNO should take appropriate measures to resolve these conflicts. For conflict resolution any kind of war and violence has to be shunned. World community needs to be mobilized and for it spiritual values have to be inculcated. We have to win over the hearts of the people who have gone astray. Policy of 'enmity to none and goodwill to all' has to be conveyed with much more vigor. Instead of communal hatred and sectarian animosities spirit of goodwill and co-existence have to be promoted. To realize these lofty objectives mechanism for interfaith understanding has to be developed. No doubt interfaith understanding and communal amity are precursors to the world peace yet to move towards it culture of peace is the need of the hour. On close examination of the *Guru Granth Sahib* we find that ingredients for culture of peace abound in it.

Guru Granth Sahib : Message of One Spirit One World

Harbans Lal*

We are fortunate to be living in the Decade of *Guru Granth* (1998-2008) which will first witness the Quad-Centennial Celebration of the Installation of the Granth in 2004 and then celebrate the Tercentennial Celebration of the Canonization of the Guru Granth as our Eternal Guru in 2008.

The Quad-Centennial celebration will be the Day when the Fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan, completed the First Version of the *Guru Granth*, considered by many as the first Interfaith Scripture in the annals of religious history. He first installed this scripture on September 1, 1604 in the Sikh's central shrine, *Harimandar*, at the City of Golden Temple, Amritsar. The Quad-Centennial Celebration of this event is planned all over the world by all Sikh organizations and many organizations of major world faiths. These celebrations are meant to have an impact on our history and the history of human family on this earth. The good news is that we have come a long way since the year 1604 when Guru Arjan bestowed upon us the first version of the *Granth* in the form of the *Pothi* which he designated as the *thaan* (abode) of divine knowledge.

Dissemination of Guru's Wisdom, *Gurmat*

It can be said that the major purpose of Guru Arjan's compilation of the *Granth* was to facilitate dissemination of the Revealed Word in a standardized and unadulterated form. So that every member of the human family has access to the teaching and is able to assimilate its relevance to its individual

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culture, time and place.

Guru Granth is now seen in every Sikh home, village and town, true to the prediction made by Bhai Gurdas four centuries ago :

ਘਰ ਘਰ ਅੰਦਰ ਧਰਮਸਾਲ ਹੋਵੈ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਸੁਦਾ ਵਿਸੋਆ॥

ਬਾਬੇ ਤਾਰੇ ਚਾਰ ਚਕ ਨੌ ਖੰਡ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੀ ਸਚਾ ਢੋਆ॥

ਗੁਰਮੁਖ ਕਲਿ ਵਿਚ ਪਰਗਟ ਹੋਆ ॥ (*Varan Bhai Gurdas, 1.27.*)

Besides its distribution in printed form, in this decade, the Sikh Scripture has been made available on CD to be distributed free and freely. The CD version of the *Granth* has already exceeded the record of any other form of *Guru Granth* printed with its translations.

Thanks to modern technology for making available the electronic medium of the World Wide Web. Through this medium the *Granth* is available literarily to millions if not billions of people. I receive mails from people in Russia, South America and other far away places because they logged on the *Guru Granth* from their web sites.

Our technologist youth has made *Guru Granth Sahib* available of WWW in world's leading most fonts and scripts so that it can reach most of the world's literate segment. *Guru Granth* on the Web is available in Gurmukhi, Hindi, Roman English, Urdu, and soon Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi and in all other major Indian scripts.

Many years ago and many years after the publication of Faridkot translation of *Guru Granth*, Professor Sahib Singh published the first comprehensive Punjabi translation of the *Guru Granth*. It is now available on electronic medium for quick reference and research. He was followed by a translation by Bhai Mani Singh of Vancouver. Most recently the Punjabi translation of Bhai Vir Singh was published posthumously. Outside of Punjab, a Sahejdhari Sikh, Bhai Lachman Chellaram, took the lead and rendered the *Guru Granth* translations in Sindhi and Hindi. He is now undertaking translations in Gujarati and Marathi. With the availability of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in

Urdu fonts on electronic medium, the Urdu translations of the Guru will be soon forthcoming.

We are pleased to announce that, the Punjabi University has just published **SRI GURU GRANTH KOSH'** (*Dictionary of Sri Guru Granth Sahib*) in 2 Volumes of approximately 1100 pages each. It is long time ago that comprehensive dictionary of the holy Scripture were prepared by Bhai Vir Singh and Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha in the form of *Sri Guru Granth Kosh* and *Gur Shabid Ratanakar Mahan Kosh* respectively. Both were landmark compilations in the field. The present publication soon to be released is a much greater effort. The Academy of Guru Granth Studies is pleased to announce that it will recognize, the author, Dr. Gurcharan Singh with an award of the *Distinguished Guru Granth Scholar* for his work on this dictionary.

By the time we celebrate the Quad-Centennial, there would have been available five different English translations. The first translation of *Guru Granth* in English was published by Dr. Gopal Singh Dardi. He was soon joined in succession by S. Manmohan Singh, Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib, Pritam Singh Chahal, and most recently Dr. Gurbachan Singh Makin all of them from India. To them joined, first time ever, an American born Sikh convert, Dr. Sant Singh Khalsa, who published an electronic version of his English translation for free distribution. Our compliment to Dr. Khalsa whose translation is the most read and cited outside India.

Dr. Jarnail Singh of Canada published first French translation a few years ago and now is ready to publish one in German language. A Spanish translation is almost ready from a Mexican Sikh convert from International Sikh Dharma tradition. A Thai scholar is finishing Thai translation and a Hebrew translation is in progress. Thai and German translations are soon to be released; Hebrew translation to be followed in a few years.

To obtain a real meaning of a verse or to seek Guru's guidance on a selected theme, one needs to search the whole

volume of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in a reasonable time. Akali Kaur Singh published the first index of *Guru Granth Sahib* verses over half a century ago. That index is now revised and made available on electronic medium to conduct rapid searches. But for more effective and interactive search, young Sikh technologists, have made available several search engines on the World Wide Web. Search Engines electronically search out and tabulate all verses on a certain topic or on a certain theme and they do so while making available all searches in tabular form and in correct spelling; plus it gives the exact reference to each quote. They can be directly inserted in manuscripts or books under preparation by the scholars working on *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Keepers of the Light are Failing

The world today fails to see the *Granth* as meant for all on account of the failures and selfishness of the present Day Keepers and Caretakers of the Scripture. Guru Gobind Singh asked us to accept *Guru Granth Sahib* as our eternal Guru and we give well deserved place to *Guru Granth Sahib* first in our own heart, and then among the world scriptures, and take it to those for whom it was meant; for each one of us, for our youth and for our neighbors. *Guru Granth Sahib* is for the whole human family. Ask my Guru, and he will tell you that it was for whole world, all religions, and whole humanity :

ਪਰਥਾਇ ਸਾਖੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਸਾਡੀ ਸਗਲ ਜਹਾਨੈ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 647)

The Sacred Words of the Guru are based upon divine revelations that are immortalized in the manifestation of the *Guru Granth*. They serve as the guide-post of our nation and are the Light of our religion. Our Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, in his last sermon of his life, chose us as Keepers of the Light. He asked us to shine the Light first on our minds and then facilitate its spread among others with all our mind, body and material resources. Further, the Guru gave to the Keepers of Light the mighty steel to protect the followers of the Light

from the evil eyes of both, the wicked and the fanatics. For many decades after Guru Gobind Singh left for heavenly abode member of our congregations obeyed the Guru's wishes. They protected the Light and let it shine among others. They sincerely secured a place for our *Shabad* Guru in the hearts and minds of the people. Those were the golden days of Sikh morality. Our communities were committed and our leaders vigilant. Whenever, any tendency of slackening our commitment was seen, we were sternly warned by the leaders of the community.

For example, a prominent Sikh leader of the early history, Kesar Singh Chhibber¹ of *Bansawalinama* fame warned all those who carried the look of a Sikh for claiming to be the followers of the Guru's Word, but in practice drifted away from the *Guru Granth*. He called them imposters because he considered them deceiving the community continuously. He said in his writing :

ਸਬਦੇ ਮੁੜੇ ਸਿਖੀਉ ਮੁੜੇ ਭੇਖੁ ਸਿਖੀ ਦਾ ਧਾਰੇ ॥²

Kesar Singh Chhibber wrote that a Sikh who turns away from *sabad* actually turns away from *Sikhee*. Should such a person be found to carry the Sikh look this person should be considered doing so as only for committing a fraud and to deceive others.

Unfortunately, the news coming from many places now seems to indicate that such imposters of the Chhibber's definition are many in the present times and many are attempting to take over the possession of the Light for their selfish motives. Let me explain.

In the recent years, the community has been spreading across the globe. There our communities make efforts to set up neighborhood congregations to practice their faith according to their need and understanding. However, soon after the establishment, the fanatic clerics begin manipulating to take over the already established congregations; the local congregations begin to lose grip on the congregational matters. The religion is taken over by a new clergy class. This class

asks that they be given the task of all care-taking matters of the LIGHT. Once they get hold of the institution they begin to use the Guru as their personal property or their commodity for commerce. Sikh communities are giving into this plan of the clergy naively and, thereby, are losing any opportunity for serving the Light of *Gurbani*.

In the earlier times there were neighborhood *Gurdwaras* and each *Gurdwara* had a caretaker *Granthi* who was a devoted person. He/she volunteered time for service of the community. This person was not a professional clergy as Guru never provided for any professional clergy class in his new religion. The congregation usually managed the worship and its programs through its volunteers. When the industrial age took over, the number of community volunteers to service a *Gurdwara* is beginning to decline, which is leading to emergence of professional *granthis* and priests, and emergence of political managers or management committees. Normally this would be a welcome trend if the *granthis* and managers were professionally trained for the job. But the situation is contrary; most clergy are uneducated and most managements are ill-trained for the job. Soon after these untrained professionals begin to claim distinction, and claim the LIGHT for the benefit of their own family. They begin to pass on the custody of the Light as their family inheritance. The Light and the sacred Word which were given for the benefit of all began to be passed down to successive generations as their possession; the possession which could be employed in family trade and occupation. They butchered the actual Sikh tradition of only serving the Light. For worldly gain the keepers of the Light began to wrap their possession in ceremonial splendor, and show the Word of God to those whom they deemed fit to see it, recited for those who could pay to hear, and made it available to comprehend by a few only select who were willing to learn a language originally foreign to their ear. These ploys, at times, seemed to insure ownership of the Light within the narrowly defined family and religious warlords.

The Keepers began to build elaborate edifices to house the Light of the Guru, build even more elaborate social and physical structures to enhance their own grandeur. They even saw fit to seek the help of laws of the land to limit others' access to our inherited possession. In the name of universalization of the message that should really call for easing approaches to the Word the clerics devised means to make it more and more elusive from people particularly from those who were not our ethnic kinds or did not look like us. By submission to the system, we are all guilty of taking possession of the Light and subjecting it to our greed as well as our perceptions. We all use the authority of God to further our individual ends or the goals of our respective ethnicity. Our face is completely turned around.

As keepers of the Light, we placed it in repositories to keep it secure. Like an invaluable jewel we keep it locked away in our safes, but actually we safe keep it from the world. As keepers of the Light, we are lost so much in our exercises and procedures that we have mistaken them for our purpose. But let me remind all of you of our real responsibility and purpose. Our purpose is to personify the Light, allowing it to shine forth into every dark corner of our inner being and every dark corner of our outer world. That is its purpose; the Light is there to keep the darkness away.

Cosmic Plan of the Guru

The cosmic wisdom of the Guru had something different in mind. The Guru asked us not to be disheartened. There will always be many devoted Sikhs who spend time and energy to practice the religion and pass on the Word to their neighbors and to the non-Sikh world. With Guru's grace the Light, in reality, continue to shine in the world around every single individual who opens the heart, and within all who seeks it, even in those whom the Keepers deem unfit for it.

In a short time of only a few centuries, we became the world's fifth largest religion; thanks to all those who did not shy away from being counted in the name of the Guru while

disregarding any proclamation from the self styled claimants of the ownership of the Word. The Infinite Wisdom (*Vaheguru*) is ours. It is with us. The *Guru Granth* as canonized by our tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, is the last revelation. We are the keepers of that tradition.

Within each tradition there are words of inclusion and exclusion upon which we base how we judge our fellow human beings. *Kafir* differs from *Gentile* in Islam for those who have Faith in God. Is the Body of Christ only for Christians? Does one have to be a Sikh to receive the Light or to be a part of *Khalsa* to keep the Light flaming? The Guru answers, no. In the court of the Infinite, what is your religion will be a non question. You will be asked of your deeds through which you would claim the divine acceptance.

We make no progress in our spiritual journey when we take the Light and refract it through prisms of our own designs. To let our spirit succeed we must learn to use the vision of Guru the vision that says that the Creator has entered in a partnership with the creative minds of His creation and made all as equal even though they may look different.

Guru Granth Celebrations to Shine the Light

We are all equal though not the same. God has provided a distinct composition in all of the cosmos from a tiniest electronic particle to a mightiest galaxy, and given each its own orbit, its own energy and its own life cycle. This was the cosmic vision of the Infinite Wisdom. Thus we can not expect uniformity in this universe. We are all distinct individuals, even children born of the same parents and even identical twins are distinct individuals. Similarly distinct are our religions, our cultures, our social systems, our orbits, and our traditions. They are all there to gather strength in diversity and serve as invaluable entities within the Creator's order. While the Sikhs vehemently affirm their distinctiveness, they do not deny the unity among all. There is a level at which they all stand together with all others. To seek the inherent strengths of diversity, the Sikh

Scripture was authored by 36 holy men. They used over 22 languages, and its idioms or metaphors taken from numerous folklores. But it still provides one message which threads through all the diversity.

The Quad-Centennial is a day to celebrate *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. As children of our Faith we must celebrate by working on efforts which pull down the barriers that obscure the Light of *Guru Granth*. This is meant for the peace on earth and peace in the heart of every one. Today what it means is that we help each other to smash both the internal and the external walls that are subtly creeping up in our religion. We live in an age that plays host to a spectrum of human diversity unprecedented in history: a thousand languages, as many cultures, seven major religions divided into a hundred thousand schisms and theologies, and all this with a growing mixed ethnicity.

At the same time, with advances in communications and transport, the globe has become smaller. The scale of interaction of people from different races, regions and communities is unprecedented. For such an age, our Scripture reflects on the whole the notion of the oneness of humankind and abundance of its resource, all to be used to establish peace and tranquility on this earth :

ਤੂੰ ਸਾਝਾ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਬਾਪੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥
ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਤੇਰੈ ਅਖੁਟ ਭੰਡਾਰਾ ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 97)

Our Scripture considers the whole world as an orchard that is nourished by God under the watchfulness of Sri Guru Gobind Singh as the one who took his last moments on this earth to give us this Scripture with the last breath of his life. Guru Arjan says :

ਏਕੁ ਬਰੀਚਾ ਪੇਡ ਘਨ ਕਰਿਆ॥ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਤਹਾ ਮਹਿ ਫਲਿਆ॥

... ..

ਸਿੰਚਨਹਾਰੇ ਏਕੁ ਮਾਲੀ॥ ਖਬਰਿ ਕਰਤੁ ਹੈ ਪਾਤ ਪਤ ਡਾਲੀ ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 385)

The most befitting act of celebrating this act of Guru Gobind Singh will be to help nourish the orchard of our global family, to get connected to our living Guru who gives us this message today, the Guru of all faiths

Conclusion

Let us tell our story to a world that needs to hear that story of the Guru Granth celebrations; the *Guru Granth* compilation, *Guru Granth* canonization, and *Guru Granth* becoming a world scripture through free dissemination. The world needs to share in the *Guru Granth* story, in their grief and in their joy, in their thanksgivings and in their anger.

Guru Granth was given to us to inspire us and to inculcate certain philosophy and certain principles in our life. We had our *Guru Granth* with us for three and four centuries and we have been bowing to its authority on daily basis, Let us then go further and share it with our neighbors.

Are Sikh communities in the world truly inspired to comprehend and cherish the principles by which we are called by our *Guru Granth* to live? The answer is yes. Our centennial celebrations are causing awakenings.

Among other things, we believe first that the *Guru Granth* is a God's gift to all humanity. That our Guru spoke to individuals and to specific historical events, but the spoken word was in metaphors and parables meaning of which is applicable to all times :

ਪਰਬਾਇ ਸਾਖੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਸਾਝੀ ਸਗਲ ਜਗਨੈ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 647)

Thus, we may make certain pronouncements :

- I. First, the Guru's wisdom is God's gift to all humanity.
- II. Second, our Guru will come thousand steps to receive the one who takes the first step towards the Guru.
- III. Third, all doors lead to the Divine and the entrants are loved irrespective of the door through which they choose to enter.

IV. Fourth, all human beings are created equal and deserve the same rights and opportunities in the court of our Guru. These are some of the facts, which make certain claims and pronouncements. Our responsibility is to take the lead and make the creed of our Guru a living truth for us and for entire world in this century. This will insure unity and peace. The purpose of our conferences and celebrations of the forthcoming centennials is for something more than making claims and pronouncements; even conferences of most fascist societies claim relevance of their system for all of the world citizens. The purpose of our enthusiasm to celebrate is that we might really come to understand the concept of the Word as the Universal Guru and its associated implications in our life, and that we might be fueled in our actions by our own resources of depth and intelligence to share the God's gift with others. We may fire up ourselves not just to serve the pronouncements but to make those pronouncements alive.

In next few years, you must all be leaders in the tercentennial celebrations, and we cannot lead what we are ignorant of. Therefore, those of us who are behind in understanding the Guru must endeavor to not only catch up but also significantly advance. This and other conferences are designed to promote understanding of the Guru's Word and prepare this understanding to share with all others. Signs of advancement are when organization of religion is less important than the Truth it propagates, when guards are less important than the treasures they are guarding, and, finally, when prescription paper is less revered than taking of medicine it prescribes.

Let me conclude with a verse from Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas :

ਬੇਦ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਗੁਰ ਹੱਟ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਲਗ ਭਵਜਲ ਪਾਰ ਉਤਾਰਾ ॥
 ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਬਾਝ ਨ ਬੁਝੀਐ ਜਿਚਰ ਧਰੇ ਨ ਗੁਰ ਅਵਤਾਰਾ ॥
 ਗੁਰ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਇਕ ਹੈ ਸਚਾ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਜਗਤ ਵਣਜਾਰਾ ॥
 ਚੜੇ ਸੂਰ ਮਿਟ ਜਾਇ ਅੰਧਾਰਾ ॥

References

1. Kesar Singh born in 1699, was related to Bhai Dharma Chand a Sikh of the Tenth Master, spent a lot of time with the Guru's family, Guru's mother and maternal uncle Kirpal ji. He also lived in Amritsar, and was very close to prominent Sikhs such as Bhai Mani Singh, Tara Singh, etc.
2. Kesar Singh Chhibbar in *Bansawali Naama* edited by Rattan Singh Jagi, 1972, pp. 187-227.

The Sikh Scripture : Inspiration for Action

Gurdev Singh*

It is heartening that Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and its Department of Guru Nanak Studies have planned a series of International Conferences to celebrate the Quad-centenary of the installation of the Sikh sacred scripture: *Granth Sahib* in Sri Harmandir Sahib. In this connection International Conference on Guru Granth Sahib and Interfaith Understanding towards World Peace, the third in its series, is being held at Amritsar from December 3 to 5, 2003. Broadly speaking it will deliberate the Sikh perspective of inter-faith understanding, its relevance towards world peace and highlight various aspects of the thought of Sikh Gurus and other contributors of the Sikh Scripture.

The efforts of GNDU and its Department of Guru Nanak Studies are praiseworthy and the theme chosen is relevant and timely. I express my appreciation of the organisers' endeavours. I wish the conference success and hope its learned deliberations will help formulate an effective programme to achieve the noble objective.

Opinions of Non-Sikh Scholars about the Sikh Scripture

How lofty, soul-stirring, meaningful, relevant, and result oriented the contents of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* are, is apparent in the comments of world renowned non-Sikh scholars, philosophers and historians. According to Duncan Greenless :

The more I dug into the pages of *Guru Granth Sahib*
the more I fell in love with them..... It is enough for

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us to take as it comes to us, to hear the lovely music in the trutās he sang, to try to live the life of inspired service and practical devotion which he taught. For these things the world will always be in debt to Guru Nanak and to those through whom he spoke in the succeeding generation.

Nobel Laureate Pearl S. Buck remarks that :

I have studied the scriptures of the great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact inspite of their length and are a revelation of the vast reach of the human heart, varying from the most noble concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of human body. There is something strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzled me until I learned that they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 16th century when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe, upon which we all live, is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our own making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to person of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind.

According to Archer :

The religion of the Guru Granth is a universal and practical religion..... The world today needs its message of peace and love.

M.A. Maculiffe emphasises that :

The Sikh religion differs as regard the authenticity of their dogmas from other great theological systems. Many of the great teachers the world has known have not left a line of their own composition, and we only know what they taught through tradition or second hand information. We know the teachings of Socrates

only through the writings of Plato and Xenophan, Budha has left no written memorials of his teachings. Kungfuzu, known to Europeans as Confucius, left no documents in which he detailed the principles of his moral and social system. The Founder of Christianity did not reduce his doctrines to writing and for them we are obliged to trust to the gospels according to Mathew, Mark, Luke and John. The Arabian Prophet did not himself reduce to writing the chapters of the Quran. They were written or compiled by his adherents and followers. But the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved, and we know at first hand what they taught. They employed the vehicle of verse, which is generally unalterable by copyists, and we even become in time familiar with their different styles. No spurious compositions or extraneous dogmas can, therefore, be represented as theirs..... As we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a more comprehensive ethical system.

In the words of Arnold Toynbee :

Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in the days of increasing communications between all parts of the world and branches of human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scripture, *Guru Granth*, will have something special of value to say to the rest of the world.

Ordinary human beings seek peace and pleasure and aspire for riddance of pain and discomfort. The more sentient among them endeavour to know the nature of working of the universe so that their enhanced knowledge may help devise methods to achieve the common good of all and might also satisfy their curiosity about the cosmological operations. Since the advent of human civilizations, profound thinkers, questful scientists and serene philosophers are engrossed in deep

cogitation and relentless research concerning the origin, structure and space-time relationship of the universe. Various religions, philosophers and scientists specify different kinds and number of planets, stars and other celestial beings and the scientists are exploring new planets. Macro and micro level research has established that the shapes, positions, numbers and nature of material formations are boundless.

New ideas and findings occasionally cause upheavals in vast segments of mankind which is not yet ready to accept them. The scientific conclusions of Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galileo (1564-1642) that the Sun was stationary and the earth moved round it caused commotion in the Christian world which termed the new scientific results blasphemous. The modern theories of physics especially the general and special theories of relativity, and the allied research tell us that the Sun is a star and the galaxies consist of stars bigger than the Sun. To a closed mind all this is faith-shattering and *mysterium tremendum* (overwhelming mystery). Guru Nanak (1469-1539) in his divine enchantment ਪਾਤਲਾ ਪਾਤਲ ਲਖ ਆਗਾਸ ਆਗਾਸ ॥ (There are countless nether worlds, and millions of skies – *Pauri 22 Japuji*) cast aside all barriers to the exploration of matter and mind. Concerned more for the welfare of the suffering humanity, he devoted himself in practical ways to uplift people morally, physically and spiritually.

Guru Nanak's compassion for the distressed humanity did not confine itself to being aware of their pain and a desire to alleviate it. Neither did he stop at empty empathizing. He set himself heart and soul to do something genuine, practical and meaningful. The test he took upon himself was not an easy one. There is no magic wand to transform misery into happiness. Guru Nanak did not believe in magic potions or *mantras*. He analysed that the suffering people faced was on account of unjust dispensation of social, economic and religious norms and also because of their ignorance. So he did not simply preach for just and fair treatment to all but exerted himself in his day to day life to bring about the desired change

even though he had to encounter numerous difficulties.

To eradicate social pain resulting from discrimination because of birth, caste, gender, creed and calling, he proclaimed that all human beings are equal. He took Mardana, a Muslim, as his life long companion. He would partake meals with a man of low calling, Bhai Lalo, in preference to feasting with a socially high ranking landlord, Malik Bhago.

Guru Nanak enhanced the prestige of women by declaring that there is no reason that the women who gave birth to all, kings and others, should be reckoned inferior to men. He did not hesitate to participate in discussions with learned men of different religious inclinations, nor was he averse to visiting their holy places to convey his message of goodwill and enlightenment. His approach was to access the people at their places to put across his mission. He went to Hardwar and made his observations about the futility of throwing water to the sun in worship mode. At Jagannath Puri he exclaimed about the bounties of nature without any discrimination. In Assam he counselled sorcerers to discard their malpractices. With Jogi Gorakhnath he held *goshtis* (discussion) to apprise them of his mission. During his visit to Mecca and Baghdad, he gave discourses stressing the presence of the Creator everywhere and in all directions. Guru Nanak emphasized that best living was of a householder and set example by leading a householder's life. He carried on his day to day chores of farming and household, preached his mission, and was even taken to jail during Babar's invasion for his outcry against injustice, torture and rapine. He gave his discourses in the language, idiom and diction of the people to build up mutual confidence and make them self-reliant. In this way he made them feel his equal and improved their literature and spoken language (Punjabi). He exhorted people to shun hypocrisy and superstitions and lead truthful life.

Renaissance ushered in by Guru Nanak was carried forward by the succeeding Gurus who reinforced the doctrines of equality, honest living, selfless service, sacrifice, justice,

self reliance, determination to oppose cruelty and oppression, fair play and merit and to be always prepared to lead a socially responsive and responsible life. To ensure purity of Gurus' teachings and to provide easy access to them, the fifth Guru Sri Arjan Dev collected utterances of his predecessors, added his own recitations as also of the awakened men like Farid, Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas and compiled them in the shape of sacred *pothi* (book).

The Sikh way of life recognising all beings equal was unequivocally established with the inclusion of enlightening utterances of awakened savants irrespective of their caste, creed, colour and calling. Guru Arjun declared his compiled book (*Granth*) as the guiding Scripture to the adherents of his faith and it was installed as sacred Sikh Scripture in Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. Guru Gobind Singh added a few utterances of the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur subsequently in *Guru Granth Sahib*.

All the ten Sikh Guru were continuum of Sikh thought, doctrines, philosophy and practices. Emphasis in the teachings of Sikh Scripture was on practical conduct and exemplary behaviour. All the Gurus recognised merit, were fully responsive to the aspirations of their adherents, rose above filial considerations in the matter of appointing their successors and rendering sacrifices while fighting against injustice and torture and were sublimely humble in their relationship with their followers. They had the courage to act upon their convictions and set exemplary modes for inspiration and emulation. Discarding futile claims of their sons, the first three Gurus Nanak Dev, Angad Dev and Amardas chose their successors from among their deserving followers. The fourth Guru Ramdass appointed his youngest son Arjan Dev as the fifth Guru ignoring his two elder sons. The seventh Guru Hari Rai declared his elder son Ramrai, who dithered in his principles while dealing with Emperor Aurangzeb, unfit for Guruship and chose his younger son Harkrishan as the eighth Guru. Sri Harkrishan who died suddenly at a very young age

gave discerning clue about the selection of the next Guru fully aware of the fervent aspirations of a legion of his undeserving close relations. Acting upon guiding hint of Sri Harkrishan, the Sikhs rose to the occasion to choose Tegh Bahadur as their ninth Guru, who proved to be a successful leader of the community. After his martyrdom, the daunting task of leading tortured adherents was ably performed by his son Gobind Singh, the tenth Master, who ended the practice of bodily Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh had come to the conclusion that the Sikhs had by now been adequately groomed to manage their corporate leadership in that they chose the right leader after the demise of Guru Harkrishan and demonstrated their worth creditably during the Guruship of ninth Guru, as also working as his own companions. While quitting his mortal frame in 1708, he declared that the Sikh commonwealth (Khalsa) shall henceforth be their own temporal Guru and *Sabad* (word, contents) of *Granth Sahib* shall be their spiritual Guru. Thus sacred scripture *Guru Granth Sahib* compiled by the fifth Guru Sri Arjan Dev in 1604 became *Guru Granth Sahib*, whose *shabad* (word) is the Guru, the spiritual guide of the adherents of Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh's decision to invest his followers with the responsibility of temporal leadership was not sudden and undeliberated. He was convinced that the teachings of Guru Nanak and his followers had instilled in them the qualities needed to manage the affairs of the community and he had been grooming them for this role himself. While administering *amrit* (baptism) to his chosen five *piaras* (beloved ones) at Anandpur Sahib in 1699, he gave clear signal that the chosen ones should equip themselves so well that they would be capable of providing corporate leadership. This he did through his act of edifying humility when he took 'amrit' from his own *piaras* who were from different castes and callings, thereby instilling in them the sense of dignity, equality and vision of leadership.

Inspired by the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib* and the practical performance of the ten Gurus, the Sikhs faced

daunting challenges to their very existence with courage, determination and high moral conduct. Encountering inhuman torture, persecution and ferocious campaigns aimed at their very extinction, the Sikhs by the end of eighteenth century became the lords of the land extending from Delhi to the river Indus and beyond. They established sovereign Sircar Khalsa at Lahore in 1799 and held the chiefdoms of Faridkot, Nabha, Jind, Patiala, Kaithal and smaller chiefdoms on the southern side of Satluj. Ranjit Singh provided a sound system of governance to his people. Though not above kingly dalliances, he was a devout follower of *Guru Granth Sahib* at heart. He did not hesitate to abide by the censorious edict issued to him by Jathedar Phoola Singh for his immoral misdemeanour.

The English had become a world power by the beginning of nineteenth century and they had acquired overlordship of the entire Indian subcontinent except the territory of Ranjit Singh. The Sikhs could not withstand the massive power and superior cunning of the English who snatched sovereignty of the Sikhs from the last independent domain to the west of Himalayas. Badly bruised and rendered powerless, the Sikhs fell back on the edifying teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib* and by the beginning of 20th century they started rehabilitating themselves socially, educationally, economically and politically and by their qualities of head and heart made their presence felt in various walks of life. Another awful blow fell on them with the partition of India in 1947. Lakhs of Sikhs lost their lives, half of their total wealth was left in the newly created State of Pakistan and one third of their numbers were uprooted from their homes and hearths in Pakistan and had to move to India. Taking solace and inspiration from the teachings of their Gurus, the Sikhs continued to play their role as a self-reliant and hardworking community and rehabilitated their shattered polity with admirable determination and community management.

The Sikhs would understandably rue the loss of their political power but in the context of dynamics of history they on the strength of their rubric have done quite well as a community vis-a-vis various other segments of the human race.

The Sikhs numbered 2195339 (0.75% of India's population) in 1901, 4335771 (1.2% of India's population) in 1961 (Source : *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*). Now the population of Sikhs in the world is about 25 million and millions more derive heavily from the *Shabad* (word) of *Guru Granth Sahib* in their life mode. Till August 1947, almost all Sikhs lived in pre-partition Punjab. Now they have settled across the globe and Sikh diaspora is found in almost every country. By dint of their qualities of head and heart they are doing well in various walks of life. Number of their religious, cultural, social, educational facilities is more than ever earlier. Listed below are a few statistics about the number of adherents of major religions in the world, their literacy achievements and status of unemployment taken from Time magazine of March 10, 2003 (these statistics were collected by Time from a recent study by another agency). These would provide instructive perspective of the comparative performance of practitioners of various religious:

World population: religion wise

Christians	2000 million
Muslims	1300 million
Hindus	900 million
Buddhists	360 million
Sikhs	23 million
Jews	14 million
Others	525 million
Non-religion	<u>850 million</u>
	5972 million

Religion	Countries surveyed	Per Capita Income	Literacy	Jobless
Jews	113	\$16100	97%	8%
Christians	218	\$ 8230	87%	10%
Buddhists	27	\$ 6740	85%	5%
Muslims	123	\$ 1720	51%	15%
Sikhs	18	\$ 702	53%	20%
Hindus	24	\$ 392	51%	20%

The above figures show that education — acquiring knowledge, skills and training for leading good life — plays a major part in development and welfare of mankind. These statistics also indicate that Sikhs are not worse off in context of their circumstances. Here I am not gloating over the Sikhs deficient performance in their individual development and under-achievement in organisational work. There is much room for improvement. They must make up the shortcoming to walk abreast with the excellent achievers. That they can undoubtedly do if they abide by the cardinal principles of their faith.

Sikhism is not a simple philosophy of conduct, it is discipline for individual and corporate functioning. Teachings enshrined in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and practiced by the Gurus highlight certain principles of human conduct, viz. monotheism, equality, honest labour, practical living, self-reliance, compassion, courage to fight injustice, prosperity for all, buoyant disposition.

The Sikhs do not believe in prophethood, reincarnation or ritualistic *mantras*. Their scripture emphasize that each person is accountable for the outcome of his work, that success is not handed over on a silver platter but rather attained through honest labour. These lead them to reflect on how they can transform their lives into something they never thought could be imaginable. The Sikh teachings reinforce the truth in the saying that leaders are not born, they are made. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is not only a compilation of sacred verse, it is sublime blueprint for how to succeed in life. It

exhorts people to serve and edify each other because when people feel good general living improves. Through the study of Sikh history, we discover that their standards of value and practical behavior are the key to succeeding in daunting times. Their values are not a simple moralistic code — though ethics are integral indeed — these are framework for practical action. Their history is the story of the transformation of men and transformation of society. It reveals that leadership is about others and not about self, it is about trust and not about aggrandizing power. The Sikh values system developed and glorified individuals. It made humble and unselfish a *nawab* (Kapur Singh). Should one have the moxie and will, in actuality and not in mere theory, one can produce nothing less than outstanding results. There is no doubt that these principles have the potential to mould a new social order across the globe.

What people want in leaders today, more than ever before, is integrity. Men of integrity produce refreshing results when they work earnestly. The Sikh Scripture captures the soul of man and reveals cardinal methods of leading honest and useful corporate life.

A Few Suggestions for Action

How to go about it ? I make a few suggestions:

- i) Maximum efforts be put in to provide good education to the people. Individuals should attain proper knowledge, skills and will to develop themselves through self discipline. They should do their chores with diligence and sincerity. They should practice their pious aspiration in day to day acts. Various social organisations should arrange facilities for efficient running of educational institutions on sound lines. Religious, moral, cultural, scientific, social studies should form healthy part of education curricular. The Supreme Court of India vide its 31.10.2002 order in T.M.A. Foundation & Ors vs. State of Karnataka & Ors

in Writ Petition (Civil) No.317 of 1993 with other petitions [JT. 2002 (9) SC 1] have loosened the governmental restrictions on recruitment of staff and enrolment of students — Private educational institutions should take advantage of this ruling and earnestly strive to provide education of the desired level. Management and teachers should not treat educational institutions as employment facilities only. They should work honestly and professionally to impart best possible instruction to the students. The government should not stifle the initiative and devotion of good educational institutions by imposing unreasonable controls on their working.

- ii) Conferences, seminars, debates on interfaith issues should be frequently held to bring about healthy understanding and useful cooperation among people of different religions. Modern technology should be more effectively used to propagate interfaith cohesiveness. Representatives of major religions of the world should meet in a conclave every decade.
- iii) The Sikhs should play an active role in organizing the interfaith seminars and conclaves. To play this role effectively they should form an association of global range. It may be given any name; say, World Sikh Organisation, World Sikh Council, World Sikh Association, Global Sikh Conclave, Vishav Sikh Sammelan. This World Body should have hundred persons from across the globe and one third of these members should retire quadrennially. This association should have an Executive Council or Executive Board of fifteen to twenty-one members. The World Body should meet every year and its day to day chores should be carried out by the Executive. This World Body should consider issues concerning the Sikhs and tender their opinion for the benefit of Sikh political, educational and social institutions. The World Body

should not feel piqued if some/any of their views are not acted upon but concern themselves, as a think-tank, with the exposition of best advice. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee should help set up such a World Body unmindful whether this World Body would act according to its dictates or not. The SGPC should treat this effort as a measure of preaching Sikh values-system, a forum for eliciting considered opinions on matters relevant to Sikh people, and a vehicle to reach out globally untrammelled by any sort of formal obligations. The World Body should not assume to possess any sort of controlling authority over other Sikh organisations in various fields, viz. religious, political, educational, social but should function in such a manner as to provide the best of counsel and considered views on issues important to the Sikhs.

May we beseech the blessings of Sikh Gurus for the fulfillment of our aspirations through the invocatory Persian verse of Bhai Nand Lal :

ਦੌਲਤਿ ਆਂ ਦਿਹ ਕਿ ਬਾਸ਼ਦ ਪਾਏਦਾਰ

Give me such riches as are stable (moral strength).

ਸੁਹਬਤਿ ਆਂ ਦਿਹ ਕਿ ਬਾਸ਼ਦ ਗਮਗੁਸਾਰ

Give me such company as should relieve sorrow.

ਤੀਨਤਿ ਆਂ ਦਿਹ ਕਿ ਬਾਸ਼ਦ ਹੱਕ ਗੁਜ਼ਾਰ

Give me such disposition as should stand by the righteous.

ਹਿੰਮਤਿ ਆਂ ਦਿਹ ਕਿ ਬਾਸ਼ਦ ਜਾਨਿਸਾਰ

Give me such strength as should prepare me for sacrifice of life (for justice).

And act upon the exhortation of Bhai Gurdas, set out below, to become practical doers and not to be vacuous talkers :

ਖਾਂਡ ਖਾਂਡ ਕਹਿ ਜਿਹਬਾ ਮੀਠੋ ਨ ਸਵਾਦ ਆਵੈ,

ਅਗਨਿ ਅਗਨਿ ਕਹਿ ਸੀਤ ਨ ਬਨਾਸ ਹੈ ॥

ਬੇਦ ਬੇਦ ਕਹਿ ਰੋਗ ਮਿਟਤ ਨ ਕਾਹੂੰ ਕੋ ਹੈ
 ਦੁਬ ਦੁਬ ਕਹਿ ਕੋਉ ਦੁਬੈ ਨ ਬਿਲਾਸ ਹੈ ॥
 ਚੰਦਨ ਚੰਦਨ ਕਹਿ ਹੋਤ ਨ ਸੁਬਾਸ ਬਾਸ,
 ਚੰਦ ਚੰਦ ਕਹਿ ਉਜੀਆਰੋ ਨ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਹੈ ॥
 ਤੈਸੇ ਗਿਆਨ ਗੋਸਟ ਕਹਤ ਨ ਰਹਿਤ ਪਾਵੈ,
 ਕਰਨੀ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਭਾਨ ਉਦਤਿ ਅਕਾਸ ਹੈ ॥

Mere repetitive uttering sugar,sugar won't render the
tongue sweet,

Mere repetitive uttering fire, fire won't dispel cold.

Mere repetitive uttering physician, physician won't
 end disease,

Mere repetitive uttering treasure, treasure won't
 provide riches

Mere repetitive uttering chandan, chandan (fragrant
 wood, sandal) won't make odour sweet,

Mere repetitive uttering moon, moon won't spread
 light.

Similarly, mere talking vacuously won't lead to
 practical conduct

Actual performance is the best percept, just as the
 rising of the Sun is self-acclamatory.

These pulsate in the dictums of :

Louis Pasteur: Success favours the prepared mind.

Voltaire: Work banishes those three evils, boredom,
 vice and poverty.

Margaret Mead: Never doubt that small group of
 thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Let us look forward to building relationships with people,
 which eventually makes a bigger impact than just preaching.

Guru Granth Sahib : **A Guide to the Path of Peace for Humanity**

Gurbakhsh Singh Gill*

The relevance and significance of *gurbani* for world peace can be understood if we answer the serious following question asked at a Sikh youth camp.

The Question :

Why not abolish religions ? From the very period of their founding they have divided people into mutually hating groups. Every religion says that there is only one God. Why this belief does not unite us ? Instead, religions have created hatred which is spreading and getting intensified every day. In the history of religions, we have witnessed shedding of innocent blood all over the globe. Unfortunately this is going on even today. Is there then any logic for retaining religion? We would like to discuss it from all aspects.

Many scholars, who have studied *Guru Granth Sahib* agree that the answer to this question is provided by *Gurbani*. I will try to explain it in my words.

The Answer :

According to the accepted tradition *Gurmat*, we today call it Sikhism, was founded in 1499 when Guru Nanak preached, "Do not divided people into Hindus and Muslim, all are children of the same Father, hence equal. No one is superior or inferior." This is endorsed in *gurbani* :

ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥

ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੧੧੩੬)

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Ram and Allah, they are names of the same Lord. We are blessed by both. These two names were used by Hindus & Muslims respectively, but in *Gurbani* they refer to all the innumerable names, which may be given to Him by His devotees. Many such names have been mentioned in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

This philosophy is elaborated in hundreds of hymns which all of you know. I would like to quote only three of them for a sample :

੧. ਏਕੁ ਪਿਤਾ ਏਕਸ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ (ਪੰਨਾ ੬੧੧)
੨. ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥
ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੧੩੪੯)
੩. ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਤਾਤਿ ਪਰਾਈ ॥ ਜਬ ਤੋ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੧੨੯੯)

It is not a theory for intellectual exercise but the Gurus demonstrated it through the institutions of *sangat* and *pangat*. Hindus and Muslim, high caste and low caste, men and women all sat together as equals (*sangat*) to sing the praises of the Lord, their common Father addressing Him by all names with equal love. To share their feelings of brotherhood, they cooked food together and partook of it together without any kind of discrimination.

Thread of Peace :

Why and where have we missed this lesson of *Gurbani*? We need to reintroduce it to spread the message of the unity of humanity. It should be an issue to be discussed today by the scholars, and the leaders to plan the celebration of the fourth centennial of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Accordingly they should draw an action plan to again pick up the thread of peace among the people to move forward.

This does need sacrifice, of course, may not be of our heads as during the Eighteenth century, but surely of our ego so that we learn to respect others as equal members of the big brotherhood, humanity. Unfortunately, we see the believers of

gurbani strongly divided among themselves. Gianis, scholars, politicians, heads of different *deras* etc., differ a lot about the secondary details of the message of *Gurbani* and the code of conduct for a Sikh.

Guru Panth which was to provide a common platform and keep them united to move together on the *Gurmat* way (*gaadi rah*) got slowly diluted and became unidentifiable, hence ineffective. May be, this discussion will awake us to understand and follow the message of *Gurbani* to pursue our responsibilities as believers of *Gurmat*. Let us make a beginning, God will bless us.

Another aspect of the revolutionary revealings of *Gurbani* is that no body can claim that God belongs to them alone. *Gurbani* explains that He is our Common Father and He equally loves us all

ਤੂੰ ਸਾਡਾ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਬਾਪੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥ (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 97)

Hatred arises when the followers of a faith preach themselves to be the only true believers and blame members of other faiths as non-believers. With a wrong belief of 'saving' members of other faiths, they actually bribe them, pressurise them, torture them and even threat to kill them (they may actually kill them to scare the others) to convert them to their faith. The people in power in the past committed and those in power are still committing this serious sin believing it to be a pious act. While they think they are doing a favour to them the 'non-believers' (people of other faiths) to qualify to enter heaven, they create a hell for them on this very earth. All over the globe this has forced helpless people, whose human rights are taken away, to become terrorists.

Gurbani decries such forced conversions by declaring "God is no body's fathers property to make a sole claim on Him. He belongs to all those who love Him":

ਆਪਨ ਬਾਪੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਿਸੀ ਕੇ ਭਾਵਨ ਕੇ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਜਾ ॥

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 658)

Hence instructions to a follower of *gurbani* are to

remember Him everyday to understand Him and be graced by Him.

ਜਿਨੀ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਗਏ ਮਸਕਤਿ ਘਾਲਿ ॥

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 8)

And the Sikh prayers always end with a request for the welfare of all people : ਸਰਬਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ ।

Struggle for human rights :

Activists for the welfare of society observe that Guru Nanak founded the Sikh faith for protecting the human rights of the people, particularly of the lowly and the weak. He preached that true religion lies in providing justice to all.

ਰਾਜੇ ਚੁਲੀ ਨਿਆਵੁ ਕੀ ॥

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1240)

ਤਖਤਿ ਰਾਜਾ ਸੋ ਬਹੈ ਜਿ ਤਖਤੈ ਲਾਇਕ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਤਖਤਿ ਬਹੈ ਤਖਤੈ ਕੀ ਲਾਇਕ ॥

ਪੰਚ ਸਮਾਏ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਪਾਇਕ ॥

(Ibid., p. 1039)

ਜਿਨੀ ਸਚੁ ਪਛਾਣਿਆ ਸਚੁ ਰਾਜੇ ਸੋਈ ॥

(Ibid., p. 97)

Gurbani reminds the tyrant rulers and their administration of anti-people actions. The religious guides and providers of justice were exposed through very harsh and strong words :

ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ ਮੁਕਦਮ ਕੁਤੇ ॥ ਜਾਇ ਜਗਾਇਨਿ ਬੈਠੇ ਸੁਤੇ ॥

ਚਾਕਰ ਨਹਦਾ ਪਾਇਨਿ ਘਾਉ ॥ ਰਤੁ ਪਿਤੁ ਕੁਤਿਹੇ ਚਟਿ ਜਾਹੁ ॥

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1288)

ਕਾਦੀ ਕੂਤੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਮਲੁ ਖਾਇ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਜੀਆ ਘਾਇ ॥

ਜੋਗੀ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਅੰਧੁ ॥ ਤੀਨੇ ਓਜਾੜੇ ਕਾ ਬੰਧੁ ॥

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 662)

On the economic front too he challenged the dishonest and corrupt people defining them to be greatest sinners :

ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੂਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥

ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਹਾਮਾ ਤਾ ਭਰੇ ਜਾ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ਨ ਖਾਇ ॥

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 141)

Further, to help the needy, he advised that one tenth of the honest earnings should be shared for social welfare. He told serving poor is serving God. To equate all people socially,

he founded the institution of *sangat* and *pangat* as stated earlier.

Universal Brotherhood in Practice :

The character of the Khalsa to respect people of all faiths during the eighteenth century is well documented. I will like to quote an incident of the twentieth century. Less than two decades ago one old man, unable to walk on his own, and supported on both sides by two healthy Sikhs, was lead out of the Ross Gurdwara, Vancouver. His harsh Punjabi words expressed his great frustration. He questioned the youth in great anger, "Why have you brought me here? This also is not the *Gurdwara* where we all Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims & *Goras* jointly cooked *langar* and partook of it together." Emotional burst of the old man brought tears in my eyes and that touching scene was engraved on my heart for ever.

The story I could understand was that first he was taken to a *Gurdwara* in Surrey but his eyes were hungry to observe the same old good spirit of all communities of the early 20th century in the *Gurdwara* built by them. With the many fold increase in the *sangat*, the site of the old *Gurdwara* at 2nd street downtown was shifted to this large building (Ross Street).

Unfortunately, today we find that old mutual love between different communities had been replaced by mutual hatred among different groups of the Sikhs. Thanks to the political rights granted to the Sikhs and their desire to (mis)use *Gurdwaras* for advancing their selfish interests, both economic and political. In most of the *Gurdwaras* in the North America, now bitter elections are fought at a very heavy cost and in some cases even violently.

The recent *langar Hukamnama* has further divided the community into irreconcilable groups, each *Gurdwara sangat* has been split into two — *kursiwala* *Gurdwara* and *pangatwala* *Gurdwara* — the hatred among them is as strong as between

two different communities in Kashmir or Palestine.

In Punjab also, we observe very strong mutual differences among the national leaders of the Panth. Therefore most of the Sikhs now feel that Guru Panth needs to be revealed and strengthened to overcome the problems of the Sikh community all over the world :

ਅਗਰ ਪੰਥ ਨਾ ਰਹਾ ਤੋ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਕੋ ਕਉਨ ਮਾਨੇਗਾ ।

Guru Panth can direct all Sikh leaders (believers of the *Granth*) to resolve their mutual differences and make them to move together on the path of *Gurmat*.

All the religions and political leaders need to sacrifice their ego and their selfish interest for following this *gurmat* path. Are they willing to adopt this life ? This is the only way they can save the boat in which all of them are sailing now.

Silver Linings :

Luckily, the nucleus of the Panth, the *sangat* is still devoted to *Guru Granth Sahib*. We can observe train loads of people of different faiths and different communities coming from all corners of India and from foreign lands to pay their homage at Sri Harimandar Sahib Amritsar. We also observe a continuous stream of all communities of different colors and features every day enters *langar* halls and partakes of food together as equals without discrimination. Go to any regional or local *Gurdwara*, we find the *sangat* devoted to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, *kirān* and *katha* of *Gurbani*. (It is only during elections that the leaders split them to "capture" *Gurdwaras* for their selfish ends.) This is a very encouraging overall situation. Before, the selfish and opportunist leaders can do any damage to this unity of the *sangat*, they may be guided by the Panth to yield to the direction of *Gurbani* so that its message of peace can be planted all over the globe.

Guru Nanak : Apostle of Religio-Social Goodwill and Amity

Darshan Singh*

Sikhism is relatively quite a young and modern religion. Guru Nanak the founder of the faith lived in the later half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century. The religion founded by Guru Nanak because of its peculiar nature has come to be interpreted differently by different scholars. Majority of the Western scholars have found it to be an unconscious or deliberate fusion of the Hindu Muslim traditions. The majority or deliberate fusion of the Hindu Muslim traditions. The majority of the Hindu scholars views it as a reform or revival movement within the fold of Hinduism. Majority of the Sikh interpreters proclaim Sikhism as an original religion based on the direct revelation of the Divine. Such contradictory but complementary view points exist because of the unique nature of Sikhism as an effort to create harmony, goodwill and amity among the religiously, socially, politically discordant, diversified and disputing people.

To the Muslims the arrogance of power and the religious degeneration that power and puff brings, had corrupted and to the Hindus the repressive regime of the Muslim and the ritualistic formulations and the caste bondage of the Brahmin had corrupted. There were Muslims and Hindus but no religious people. The common masses were confused and bewildered about the true nature of religion. The sects were multiplying but the true religion was declining and fading out. The great savant and poet Bhai Gurdas a close relative and associate of

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the third, fourth, fifth and sixth Gurus has very appropriately summed up the overall, prevalent decadent state of religion in the following manner :

Degeneration occurred in the world, leading to the four caste-divisions and enactments about four stages of life.

The Sanyasis into ten and the Yogis were divided into twelve sects;

Various orders of hermits, Jain monks and the unclad recluses set up endless recriminating debate;

The Brahmins set up strife on the manifold interpretations of Shastras, Vedanta and Puranas;

The Six sects proliferated through mutual strife into thirty six varieties of superstitious falsehood;

Many engaged in black magic, the search for the elixir of life and in various corruptions;

Truth indivisible was divided and sub-divided into numerous ugly shapes;

Truly, Kaliyuga led men into mazes of illusion.

(Stanza 19)

Many were the streams that flowed, and so appeared Mohammad with his companions;

His followers too divided into seventy-two sects and spread strife in manifold ways;

He made current the Fast, Id and Namaz and imposed a new ritual on the world;

Among Muslims appeared various orders of religious teachers of various sects;

The Mohammadans pulled down Hindu temples and erected mosques in their place;

They slaughtered the humble cow and spread foul sin on the earth;

Their minds filled with hate for all other creeds;

Calling them Kafirs, Mulahid and such others;

Sin spread all the world over. (Stanza 20)

Hinduism and Mohammadanism, each was divided into

four sects;

Strife was wide-spread among men, who were filled with egoism manners and pride;

Ganga and Banaras were sacred to the Hindus as were Mecca and Kaaba to the Mohammadans;

The Mohammadan was firm on circumcision, while the Hindu was devoted to the sacred thread and the paster mark;

The means of Ram and Rahim, Manifesting One Reality, yet their diversity led men astray from the path of Truth;

All forgot the Veda and the Koran, and followed Satan on the way of greed and worldliness;

Truth was caste aside; and Brahmins and Maulvis clashed each with each bitterly;

None practised the way of escape from transmigration."¹

(Stanza 21)

The perennial spirit and ennobling inspiration of religion had come to be encrusted and obliterated with the veils of man made boundaries of caste, creed, races and meaningless rituals and ritualistic observations. Such were the challenges which Guru Nanak accepted and such was the degeneration which he resolved to check from further deterioration and to improve. For the amelioration of the degenerated condition of the people, Guru Nanak devised a very noble and practicable approach. He visited every accessible religious centre and religious leader to wean them away from the false and divisive religious exercises and to involve them in his own positive programme to awaken the people to the perennial springs of religious inspiration and to promote mutual trust and harmony. For the accomplishment of the above purpose he went to 'Ganga Banaras' and also 'Meca Kaaba' in addition to innumerable religious leaders and centres of the Muslims, Hindus, Yogis and others.

The holy ministry of the Guru begins with a highly attracting but at the same time severely admonishing utterance :

'There is no Hindu or no Mussalman'.

The people had wrongfully identified religion with outward

forms, there were neither true Hindu or Muslim. In their ignorance the Hindus and the Muslims were set against each other. For the Hindus the Muslims were *Malecchas* and for the Muslims Hindus were *Kafirs*.

Fortunately, for Guru Nanak, there was already a tiny minority of the Sants, Yogis and Sufis, who were already striving to bridge the ever widening gulf between the two communities of the Hindus and the Muslims in their own limited spheres. Two reasons for which their endeavour could not gain much success at the social level was their emphasis on monastic life and their other worldly attitude. They could appreciate each other's religious convictions, but they failed to evoke any positive response at the social level. Socially the people remained divided in the name of Hinduism and Islam.

Among the Muslims the Sufis were relatively more open-minded and tolerant towards other faiths than the Ulama. Their attachment to the spirit was more firm than to formalism. Their prayer and worship in relation to the *Ulama* was less formal and more close to the inner spirit. The following saying amply explains the difference between the attitudes of Qazis and Sufis. Sheikh Jalal-al-Din Tabrizian an eminent disciple of Sheikh Shihab-al-Din Suhrawardi (A.D. 1144-1234) is said to have told *qazi* of Badaun that when Sufis offered prayers they found themselves facing God, while the *Ulama* could never see God but only turned their face towards the direction of Ka'ba.²

The Sufis were also at variance with the *Ulama* with respect to their method of proselytizing. They mostly used the weapon of love and persuasion than the sword and repression. However, some Sufi orders also employed the State machinery for the purpose of poselytizing. The Suhrawardis, for example, accepted the administrative posts and accumulated wealth.³ Whereas the Chistis, before the time of Akbar, kept themselves aloof from the State.⁴

Innumerable Sufis too have undergone untold sufferings at the hands of the orthodox *qazis* and emperors. The example of Hallaj (d. 922.) is unparalleled in the history of sufferings at

the hands of the bigoted orthodox. During the times of Aurangzeb famous Sufi saint Sarmad too met the same fate.

It may also be noted that almost all the orders of the Sufis, who were relatively more liberal and tolerant towards the other religions subscribed to the doctrine of 'Wahdat-ul-Wujud' expounded by Sheikh Muhinddin Ibn-al-Arabi (A.D. 1165-1240).

Ibn-al-Arabi's conception of Wahdat-ul-Wujud is an extension of the Islamic doctrine that "there exists but one God", he takes us to the profession that "there is nothing in existence except God..." Ibn-al-Arabi's system implies the immanence of Divine Being.⁵ The idea of Wahdat-ul-Wujud (Unity of being) by implication accepts the manifestation of God in other religions also thus leading to the acceptance of the plurality of religions. To prove such implications of the doctrine, Yusuf Hussain quoted Abul Fazl, who wrote :

"O God, in every temple I see people that seek
Thee, and in every language I hear spoken
people praise Thee !

Polytheism and Islam feel after Thee !

Each religion says, "Thou are one, without equal."⁶

However, *Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi Naqshbandi*-a strong supporter of the orthodoxy, the chief disciple of Khwaja Baqi Billah (A.D. 1563-1603) seventh in the line of succession from Khwaja fought tooth and nail against the doctrine of "Wahdat-ul-Wujud" and he propounded his own doctrine of "Wahdat-ul-Shuhud" (apparentism) or the 'unity of vision'. Yusuf Hussain elaborating his doctrine explains : "The Mujaddid rejected the principle of immanence as contrary to the ethical life of Muslims. His polemic was directed against the mystic doctrine of an undifferentiated reality in which all individuality is lost. The pantheistic mergence of personality in God cancels the idea of human personality and its responsibility before God. It also cancels moral valuation and distinction and denies freedom. According to Islamic teaching, the Mujaddid maintains that God comprehends everything and is nearer to us than our-life-

vein, as the Quran has put it. The nature of this comprehension and nearness is beyond human understanding. The stage of '*abdiyat*' or servitude can only be reached when one is completely free from all kinds of worldly attachments. The relation between man and God is that of slave and master, or that of the worshipper and worshipped."⁷

It is pertinent to mention here that it was the same Mujaddid-i-Alif Sani who pleased at the martyrdom of the fifth Guru Arjun Dev wrote to Farid Bakhari, entitled Murtaza Khan the governor of Lahore. "The execution at this time of the accursed Kafir of Goindwal...with whatever motive...is an act of highest grace for the followers of Islam."⁸

It is also noteworthy in this context that Aurangzeb was the disciple of Khwaja Muhammad M'asum son of Mujaddid." It was the exclusive and rigid attitude of the Islamic orthodoxy which was responsible for the forcible conversion to Islam and proved fatal for the harmonious growth of social equality and religious co-existence. It was against this attitude that Sikhism had to carry a long drawn battle. The main reason behind the martyrdoms of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur was also this orthodoxy and repressive policy of the Muslim emperors and the *Ulamas*. Beyond the above particular reason Sikhism never entertained any enmity or ill-will against the Muslims and Islam.

At this point we may again turn to the message of Guru Nanak and his endeavours to promote and propagate harmonious social relations and religious co-existence based on love of God and equality of mankind. The basic principle of Guru Nanak's teachings is the unity of Godhead. The belief in the basic unity of God comes very close to the Islamic belief of *Tauhid*. The Islamic attitude towards the believers of one God is that qualified acceptance as is illustrated by the following dialogue :

"Once Sheikh Rizq Allah asked his father, Sheikh Sa'd Allah', was the famous Kabir, whose verses everyone recites, a Muslim or a Kafir ? His father said, "He was a *muwahhid*

(monotheist). Sheikh Rizq Allah further asked, 'Is a *muwahhid* different from a *Kafir* or a Muslim ?' Sheikh Sa'd Allah replied, "It is difficult to understand this truth you will gradually learn it."¹⁰ But the God of Guru Nanak is Allah and Ram at the same time. He is transcendent as well as immanent, creator as well as prevalent in the creation. He is not the God of any particular race, community or sex. He is the God of all. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all. All are under the Divine Order, there is no one without it. This idea of God is universal in spirit and humanitarian in its application. It aims at unifying the whole mankind on the principle of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. There was no one to challenge the belief of Guru Nanak. At the religious level it aims at levelling all the disparities existing between different traditions and at the social level it aims at promoting human brotherhood and equality.

Guru Nanak's principal of God thus lays firm foundation of true universalism. The primary meaning of universalism as elaborated in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* is "the setting aside of the belief that a nation or a race is privileged to enjoy the special protection and favour of God, or of a deity whom it recognizes as peculiarly its own and contemplates all nations and races as standing actually or potentially; in one and the same relation to one and the same God."¹¹

Along with the belief in the unity of God and brotherhood of man, Guru Nanak emphatically recognises the religious pluralism. All people can attain the grace and favour of God provided their prayer and worship-whatever may be its form - is pure. The Guru tells the Muslim to be a good Muslim, to the Hindu to be a good Hindu and to the Yogi to be true Yogi. He lays down that if a Muslim is a good Muslim his *Namaz* and *Roza* is pure, his quest for God is genuine, then he is a good Sikh too and his compositions can be included in the Scripture of the Sikhs. This is a revolutionary practice laid down by the Sikh Gurus and has remained part and parcel of the Sikh life ever since its inception. It is in this sense that Professor Puran Singh, a contemporary Sikh poet calls Walt Whitman a Sikh of

the Guru.¹² The Sikh history is replete with such examples. The Sikh Gurus happily associated with devoted people from among the other faiths. According to the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*¹³ Baba Nanak is shown to be parting from Sheikh Farid (of course he cannot be the renowned Baba Sheikh Farid) after staying with him for a few days and singing the following hymn :

Come sisters of my soul ! Embrace we
 One another, closest companions;
 Get together and discourse on the Almighty Lord.
 Holy Lord ! All qualities are Thine, all faults ours
 Lord-Creator ! All by Thy might are sustained.
 This one Word we contemplate : With Thee with us,
 What need of another ?¹⁴

According to an old tradition the foundation stone of the Harimander Sahib (Golden Temple) is said to have been laid by Sain Mian Mir (A.D. 1550-1635) a renowned Qadiri Sheikh of Lahore. Mian Mir maintained regular contacts with Guru Arjan Dev and Gur Hargobind. Pir Buddhu Shah of Sadhora fought with Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani, where two of his sons, one close relative and many more followers died.¹⁵ The Muslim bards have regularly been performing *Kirtan* in the Harimander Sahib till the partition of the country in 1947. People believing in any religion are free to visit the *gurdwara* and partake of Guru Ka Langer. No distinction is ever made at the time of distributing of *Karhah Parsad* in the congregation.

Especially on the social level the Gurus have almost revolutionized the whole perspective. All distinctions and inequalities made in the name of creed, caste, race, sex have been totally disapproved. The Gurus took a very clear and definite stand on the issue of monasticism and asceticism. Monasticism had almost divorced the religious life from the social life. Similar was the effect of asceticism on the social life. The Gurus totally disregarded monasticism and asceticism in their traditional sense. They related them to the active social life and retained them in spirit. One is to lead a monastic life

while living in the society. Such was the doctrine propounded by the Gurus. It is because of this doctrine that no organised order of the monastics exists among the Sikhs. No other religion of the world accords woman the religious and social status which she enjoys in Sikhism. The inequalities based on caste have found no place in Sikhism. Disinterested service of the people have attained the status of the worship of God. The Sikh Gurus thus have not only brought revival in religious life, they have also reunited the religious life with the social life which had got separated because of innumerable monastic orders of the different sects.

During their brief history of five hundred years the Sikhs have emerged as the defenders of the downtrodden and deprived. They have always fought for the rights of have-nots and equality and justice at all levels. Religiously the Sikhs are far more open-minded, tolerant and liberal than any other religious community. In their worship they are far more less formal and superstitious. Socially they are the champions of righteousness, defenders of equality and devoted to the service of people. Economically they are far more enterprising and forward looking among other religious communities. Wherever they have gone, their contribution in all spheres of life is far more greater than their tiny minority. This whole revolution came about because of the touch and inspiration of the Gurus.

The religion of the Sikh Gurus has not only liberated the people from age old superstitions, meaningless ritual forms but has played a most creative and constructive role in bringing the two warring communities of the Hindus and the Muslim close to each other and creating goodwill and mutual trust amongst them. It is not without surprise that at the death of Guru Nanak, both Hindus and Muslims claimed him to be their own. Even to this date such claims about the Sikhs are constantly being made. Professor Arnold Toynbee is stating the hard fact when he says :

Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen, the living higher religions are

going to influence each other more than ever before in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race. In the coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scriptures the *Adi Granth*, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions whose relation have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury.¹⁶

We may close the above brief description of Sikhism with the following popular saying about Guru Nanak :

Baba Nanak Shah Faqir

Hinduan da Guru Musalmana da pir.

(Baba Nanak is the king of mystics. He is the Guru of the Hindus and *Pir* (guide) of the Muslims).

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Humanism of *Guru Granth Sahib* and World Peace

Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon*

Humanism is any view that considers the well being of man in this life, as opposed to the next, to be of primary importance. Renaissance humanism grew in Europe as a revolt against the Church's restrictions on knowledge and lay emphasis on man's acquiring knowledge and fulfilling himself in this life. Naturalistic humanism, the 20th-century philosophy, rejects belief in all forms of the supernatural. It maintains that the good of man on this earth is the supreme ethical goal, and relies on reason, science and democracy for the solution of human problems. It is a logical outcome of the 19th-century French philosopher Auguste Comte's positivism and utilitarianism of British philosopher Jeremy Bentham. While Comte, the founding father of 'sociology' professed that science could ultimately answer all questions of philosophy, and philosophical problems would be solved by sociology, Bentham, an economist and lawyer, had propagated the maxim that "The right action is that which produces the greatest happiness in the greatest number of people."

Humanism is thus man centered rather than divinity centered as most main religions of the world are. The idea of humanism is, however, as old as the Greek philosophy and is quite predominant in the Vedic and Buddhist philosophies too. Dr. Wazir Singh holds that "Concern for the welfare of man and the human species can be discerned in the writings of both the theists and naturalists, though the meaning and

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significance of humanism has varied from person to person and school to school.”¹ All religions are basically concerned with the welfare of man and human species, but they generally tend to achieve this aim through divine intervention. On the other hand the doctrine of humanism that grew in the West of Middle Ages seeks to achieve it by human efforts without any dependence upon the divine.

However, the Indian sub-continent had never faced the adverse politico-religious conditions which the Europe had faced in the Dark and Middle Ages, for which reason an independent movement of humanism did not grow here and Indian humanism is mostly religion based. For example, when in India, the exploitative priestly class, and the narrow caste-system nurtured by it, had become too oppressive during the pre-Christian period, it had given birth to religion-based humanism in the shape of Buddhism². During the second millennium, humanistic Bhakti Movement³ had come up in reaction to the combined exploitation by the Hindu and Muslim priestly classes. Bhakti Movement had spawned many new reformist faiths like *Dadu-panth* and *Kabir-Panth*. Sikhism which gave greater importance to humanism than to divinity, to *jiwan-mukti* (corporeal salvation) than to *videh-mukti* (afterlife salvation) and to communal co-existence and peace, is the focus of this paper.

However, there lies some difference between the later Hinduism, greatly influenced by the Buddhist and Jain non-violence, and the doctrine of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Sikhism, while keeping deeply wedded to the philosophy of greatest altruism and humanism, eventually grew a strong tradition of armed struggle, beginning from the time of the martyrdom of the fifth Guru Arjan Dev. However, the Sikh martiality was not directed towards spread of its faith, like *jihad* in Islam, but for the protection of human rights. The Sikh tradition holds that the sixth Guru Hargobind had taken to wearing princely attire, and arms. He had started encouraging his followers to take to arms and had organised military training

for them. It is also said that he had even raised a standing Sikh soldiery, taken to sitting on a throne, and had even raised some fortifications around Amritsar. This had introduced Sikhism to martialism that had culminated into the creation of Khalsa. But the Sikhs were conditioned by the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib* to take to arms only for the protection of justice, beliefs and the meek. It was ordained by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh that, "When all means to get justice fail, it is righteous to lift the sword."⁴

Yet Sikhism had continued to be the harbinger of peace and humanism between the two warring civilisations of Hinduism and Islam. During the century long sway of the Sikh confederacies (*misals*) in Punjab digging the grave of the Mughal Empire⁵ in north-western India, the peaceable Muslim laity and aristocracy continued to enjoy their protection. In the subsequent half-a-century-long rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs co-existed in perfect peace and harmony. Despite having wrested his kingdom from the barbaric Mughals, who were fond of ordering group executions in public on the slightest pretext, he is not known to have ordered even a single execution. Yet he and his dauntless armies, mostly consisting of Khalsa Sikhs, had broken the back of the ferocious Afghans who had habitually invaded and plundered Punjab and India regularly over a millennia.

When the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak had appeared on the scene in the sixteenth century India, his land of birth was a land ravaged, plundered and humbled by almost five centuries of successive waves of Islamic invasions from the West by Afghans, Turks, Arabs and Mughals. The native Hindus, in whom he was born, were the subjugates of, and paid obeisance to, the Muslim ruling classes. They had become worse than second-class citizens, and their coercive conversions to Islam was a favourite pastime of the vanquishers. Demoralisation and resulting immorality was the fate of the Hindu society. The Rajput Ranas, the most valorous class of Hindus had been so thoroughly routed that to survive they

had struck marital alliances with the Mughals and put their armies at the disposal of the Mughal Court to reap the benefits of serving as its Courtiers and Commanders. Most centres and fonts of Hindu religiosity, morality and spiritual guidance lay in ruins; charlatans had spread superstition, racialism and ritualism, further degrading and disgracing Hinduism in the eyes of Muslims, the elite of the day. Centuries long valiant efforts of Bhakti Movement to infuse new life into the downtrodden Hindu society were hardly bearing any fruit and had also been unable to bring peace between the two clashing communities and cultures.

The healer appeared in Guru Nanak who pronounced in his *bani* in raga Sri that, "He alone may claim to be a genuine Guru whose instinct for uniting people is unfailing."⁶ He rejected the contemporary ritualistic preaching of both the Hindu and Muslim clerics with equal force. The spiritual knowledge available around him left his divinely attuned mind totally unsatisfied. For almost a quarter of century, Guru Nanak travelled to various lands in order to preach his message as well as to interact with the leaders of other faiths. He went as far as Sri Lanka in the south, Assam in the east, Tibet in the north, and Saudi Arabia and Iraq in the west. He would unhesitatingly take up the garb, style and idiom of the people he came across to win their faith. "Embrace the positive qualities of others, leaving their negative ones", recommends Guru Nanak in his *bani* in raga Suhi.⁷ Thus, there would hardly be any major religion of his times having any concern with the Indian polity that Guru Nanak would not have sought to enquire into.

By the times of Guru Nanak, mankind all over the world was experiencing great revolutions in knowledge and civilisation. Mathematics, astronomy, alchemy, physics and geography had made great strides in Arabia under powerful and enlightened Muslim civilisations of the Middle Ages, which had in turn kindled the wave of Renaissance and Reformation in Europe. Copernicus, a European astronomer

contemporary of Guru Nanak was challenging the erroneous belief of the Christian Church that the Earth was the centre of the whole universe, and Galileo was using the telescope to prove that there were other 'earths' besides our Earth. Printing press had been invented, and Luther and Calvin were striving to deliver a deathblow to superstition, bigotry and fundamentalism in the Roman Catholic Christianity. While Guru Nanak was wandering about in search and propagation of the truth, European seafaring adventurers like Columbus and Vasco da Gama were sailing around the world in search of India fabled as the "golden sparrow".

What wonder then that Guru Nanak's doctrine would be much more modern, enlightened, universal, and cosmopolitan than those born in the Old and Middle Ages. It could naturally avoid many a superstition and nescient pitfall of faiths of ancient and medieval times. Guru Nanak had strived primarily to establish an enlightened, egalitarian and humanistic society. He succeeded where others had failed in winning equal confidence of the two hostile communities by singing of universal brotherhood of mankind in a language and idiom acceptable to the both. When he was asked during *hajj* to Mecca whether he considered Muslims more pious than the Hindus, Guru Nanak had stated sagaciously that devoid of righteous conduct either of them would deserve equal contempt.⁸

Guru Nanak's nine illustrious successors, till the tenth Guru bestowed eternal guru-ship on *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scripture, had carried on his mission faithfully. The next three Gurus had added prolifically to the *pothi* (book) of his hymns Guru Nanak had left in their care. Conforming hymns of many Bhakti Movement Bhaktas and Sufis were also included in it. The succeeding Gurus had also further evolved his practices of congregational *kirtan*⁹ and community *langar*¹⁰ into enduring institutions of integrating people of all castes, creeds and classes. When the great Mughal Emperor Akbar¹¹ had, while crossing the river Beas at Goindwal on a

visit to Lahore, seen the *Guru-ka-Langar* being run by the third Guru Amar Das open to all without distinction, he was so impressed that he gifted a *jagir* of 500 *bighas* of land on which were later built a township of Ramdaspur which later grew into the holy city of Amritsar, and the Harmandir – the temple of the Supreme Being – now known as the Golden Temple also since after Maharaja Ranjit Singh got it gilded.

While founding Ramdaspur, Guru Ramdas had invited people of all callings, creeds and castes to settle there. When the fifth Guru Arjan had begun building the Harmandir, now famous the world over as the Golden Temple, he had invited the Muslim saint Mian Mir from Lahore to lay the foundation stone. Entrances were provided from all the four directions, a standard feature of all Sikh *gurdwaras* since then, symbolising open-armed welcome for all humanity without any distinction. And when Guru Arjan got compiled the first recension of the Sikh Scripture for to be installed in the Harmandir, he included into it the conforming *bani* of about thirty Bhagtas and Sufis bards of different caste, classes and regions along with the *bani* of the Sikh Gurus.

Gurbani enshrined in the Sikh Scripture, in the best Indian tradition of *ekam sad vipra bahuda vadanti* – that is, the Real is one but the wise describe Him variously – impressed upon both the feuding communities the futility of bickering over the exclusive validity of their respective faiths and exhorts them to follow the paths of their respective faiths faithfully because they all lead to the realisation of the same Singular Supreme Being, the Creator of all, whether you call him Allah or *Parbraham*. Said Guru Nanak in his *bani* in raga Gauri, "There may exist two parallel paths – the Hindu and the Muslim, but both converge on the same Lord."¹² Third Guru Amardas goes a step further when he prays in his *bani* in raga Bilawal, "Grant me redemption, O Lord, (if not through the door I have chosen), then through the door of your choice."¹³

In his *bani* in raga Ramkali, Guru Arjan puts forward the

same idea more clearly, "Let it be clear to one and all, that it is the Guru who removes the pall of falsehood and shows how Allah and *Parbraham* are the same".¹⁴ When a Sikh bows before their Scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*, he bows before their eternal Guru¹⁵ based upon not just the wisdom of their own living Gurus whose *bani* is enshrined in it, but also before the wisdom of thirty odd Hindu and Muslim Bhagtas and bards whose *bani* is also included therein. Some of these non-Sikh Bhagtas belonged to castes and classes considered lowly by the traditional Hinduism, and many Muslims too. But Sikhism considers all people as equal and equivalent. Such catholicity, equating the two conflicting communities was bound to sow the seed of peace between them.

Tuzak-i-Jahangiri, the autobiography of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir bears witness to the common appeal of Sikhism for the opposing communities while recording Guru Arjan's martyrdom on the narrow-minded orders of the Emperor Jahangir. It records, "At Goindwal on the banks of the river Beas, a Hindu named Arjan lived in the garb of a *pir*, whom many simple-minded Hindus and ignorant and lowly Muslims revered as their Guru. I had been pondering for quite sometime to either close this shop of falsehood active for three or four generations, or else to convert him to Islam. When the foolish prince Khusro went to see him, the Guru had put a *tilak* on his forehead. Therefore, I ordered him and his family to be arrested along with all property and dealt with according to the law of *Yasa*¹⁶ for treason." The Guru was thus barbarically tortured and killed simply because he was popular amongst both Hindus and Muslims and had not refused food to the fugitive prince fleeing for his life to Kabul.

The Emperor, however, had later relented on finding that he was mislead, and restored everything to the only son of the martyred Guru who became the sixth Guru of the Sikhs. In fact Chandu Lal, the Diwan of the Lahore province, who had deliberately reported wrong facts about the Guru and prince Khusro due to personal antagonism was also handed

over to the sixth Guru for appropriate punishment. According to some references the Guru had adorned princely attire and two swords, one representing *Miri*¹⁷ and the other the *Piri*¹⁸, and sat on a throne, in the building in front of the Harmandir¹⁹ Muhsin Fani, a contemporary and friend of the Guru, informs that this was the main reason for the imprisonment of the Guru in fort of Gwalior.²⁰ The Emperor is reported to have later taken the Guru along on his way to visit to Kashmir. When the Emperor had travelled on, the Guru had traversed the 'Paradise on Earth' preaching his message.

It were probably these contacts, and the fact that many Rajput Ranas closely related to the Mughal Emperors were also devotees of the Sikh Gurus, which had encouraged a deputation of the Hindus of Kashmir to approach the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur Sahib, a quarter of century later, for help in the face of a bloody campaign of the Governor of Kashmir to forcibly convert Kashmiri Hindus to Islam to appease the most bigoted and fanatic Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. When the Guru had gone to Delhi to intercede, the zealot Mughals would not listen to any arguments regarding the rights of all religions to exist together. Instead the Guru's execution was ordered when he had refused to convert to Islam despite the Emperor's persuasions.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's senseless and barbaric execution over the religious rights of the adherents of another faith was a unique example of altruism. According to *Bachittar Natak*, "Nobody has ever equalled the act of Guru Tegh Bahadur; his uniqueness lies in his martyrdom in the defence of the Hindu's *janeu* and *tilak*."²¹ For this sacrifice, Guru Tegh Bahadur had earned the honorific of being *Hind-di-Chadar*, the veil of India's honour! A couple of years ago, a large number of displaced Kashmiri Pundits had gone in a procession from Chandigarh to Kesh Garh, Anandpur Sahib and had installed there a plaque marking their eternal gratefulness to him.

This altruistic legacy and creed of Sikhism to end all divisions and distinctions spreading peace and harmony

amongst people of all castes, creeds and classes was taken to new heights by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh when he created the Khalsa²², which has lent the present distinguishable form to the Sikhs. When he chose the *Panj Piyare*, the Five Beloved Ones of his new creed, with the blood-curling call of surrendering their lives to his blood dripping naked sword, all had belonged to different castes, creeds and corners of the country. Bhai Daya Singh was a Punjabi *Khatri*, Bhai Dharam Singh a Jat from Hastinapur, Bhai Sahib Singh a *Nai* from Karnataka, Bhai Himmat Singh a *Mehra* from Orissa, and Bhai Mohkam Singh a *Chhimba* from Gujarat. He had baptised them with the 'baptismal water consecrated with the double edged sword', and had got himself similarly baptised by them in turn, thus equating them with himself, a unique convention of "*apey gur chela*", that is, the Guru being himself the follower too. More than once in Sikh history, the Tenth Guru as well as the subsequent Sikh leaders, had to bow before the majority decision of the community following this tradition, which is honoured in Sikhism till today.

Thus Sikhism is very cosmopolitan and universal in essence and outlook and propagates the idea of one world and one humanity. No other religion has perhaps, shown this catholicity of outlook and faith in bringing together people of all castes, creeds and classes into its fold, and gospel of sages of diverse creeds into its scripture. No wonder, the people of all castes and creeds had lived in utmost peace and harmony under Sikh Raj. The following proclamation of Guru Gobind Singh in his *bari Akal Ustati*²³ states the essence of *gurbani* and Sikhism as a whole :

Let all know that they belong to one and the same caste,
 The temple and the mosque are the same,
 Hindu and Muslim worship is fundamentally the same,
 All mankind is one, though it appears variously,
 Geographical diversities alone create the differences,
 All humans are made similarly of similar elements,
 The God of Hindus and Muslims is the same,

And same is the message of Hindu
and Muslim scriptures.

Growth of such cosmopolitan thinking amongst the religions of the world alone can spread true humanism and harmony. Only such truly humanistic creed can become a Universal Religion. Thus humanism is a perfect candidate for being a secular universal religion for the simple reason that while it addresses itself completely to the good and welfare of man it totally ignores the mythical and superstitious domain of God, His creation and His worship. Since religion based on different concepts of the Divinity and His worship becomes the major cause of divisions and strife amongst the humanity, cult of humanism could, theoretically, be the ultimate panacea for world peace and harmony. However, Sikhism introduces an element of spirituality and morality in the bare concept of western humanism without imbibing weakness and servility. Rather it teaches and preaches to impart as well as to procure justice, and to live in self-respect, dignity and righteousness, ever-ready to fight and sacrifice for human rights and justice.

Although the Sikhs had become the first Indians after centuries to have succeeded in subduing the Afghans and Baluchs on the north-western frontier of India from further incursions into India, yet they did not persecute these vanquished ferocious Muslim races. Sikhism just does not preach division and persecution of people and communities on the basis of races, creeds, classes and castes. The message of *Guru Granth Sahib* preaches that all humanity is the children of the same Singular Supreme Being and thus belongs to a common brotherhood, laying the foundation of mutual peace and harmony. Thus *Guru Granth Sahib* is a unique font of humanism and its gospel ought to be spread the world over to achieve these most vital aims for the survival and perpetuity of human kind.

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3. "The bhaktas... preached equality, faith and love, in contrast with scepticism and egotism. ... What binds them together is the nobility of the motive and the supreme effort in promotion of an ethical humanism." – Wazir Singh, op. cit., pp. 26-27.
4. *Dasam Granth*, Zafarnamah, 22.
5. Carved in India wrested from the Afghan Sultanate by Babur of Mongolian ancestry whose forefathers had seized the reign of Afghanistan and converted to Islam to avoid sending tribute back home.
6. *Guru Granth*, p. 72.
7. Ibid., p.766.
8. Bhai Gurdas, Var 1:32.
9. Congregational hymn singing open to people of all hues.
10. Free messing for all, sitting together on the same ground.
11. The Mughals were actually Mongols and were not initially very enthusiastic Muslims. Akbar, who had struck marital relations with Rajput Ranas in India, had actually tried to propagate Din-I-Illahi, a common persuasion of his own, borrowing much from Hinduism and Christianity, besides Islam.
12. *Guru Granth*, p. 233.
13. Ibid., p.
14. Ibid., p. 897.
15. The Tenth, and final living Guru Gobind Singh, had before passing away not long after having lost all the four of his sons at the hands of treacherous Mughal expeditionary force, bestowed eternal Guruship upon the Sikh scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*.
16. The barbaric Mongolian code providing for very severe and torturous punishments for even common offences.

17. Pertaining to a Mir or Amir – a ruler.
18. Pertaining to a Pir – a sage. Bhai Santokh Singh, *Suraj Parkash*.
19. The Throne of the Timeless, that is the eternal Supreme Being or God.
20. *Makhiz-i-Tawarikh-i-Sikhan*, ed. Ganda Singh, Sikh History Society, Amritsar, 1948
21. *Dasam Granth*, Bachittar Natak, 215/13.
22. The community of Sikhs totally dedicated to Guru Gobind Singh, who could even lay their lives at his bidding unhesitatingly.
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Sikh Model for Universal Consciousness

Balkar Singh*

This topic is being discussed here with reference to the insights available in *Guru Granth Sahib* for Interfaith Understanding to World Peace. The sort of peace conceived in *Bani* is not in any way the peace perceived by western theorists and adopted in competition by almost all world religions. It is established that "Peace" is a multi dimensional state of concord or tranquility in a sense of agreeing pact i.e.,

- a) Freedom from civil disturbance.
- b) Security of order within a community provided for by law or custom.
- c) Freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or motions.
- d) Harmony in personal relations.
- e) Mutual concord between governments.
- f) A pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity.

From this the synonyms can be quietudes euphoria, silence concord and pleasurableness. So the holistic perspective of peace is the real problem with all the spiritualities because it is easy for the spiritualities to transcend the ethnic dimensions of their concerned religious limitations. So first of all interfaith understanding should be worked out for common concerns of all major spiritualities in a spiritual manner. Sikhism from this angle can serve the cause in a needed manner.¹

Even if peace in essence for a lay man is to live and let live temper or policy in a humanistic context, the peace in or

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through *Bani* is primarily spiritual-specific, which was duly lived in throughout history by the Sikhs. It is almost reversing the often perceived human temper of war outside to war within.² It is developing or emerging into peace within. This is also considered and believed *dharmayudh* which again is not religious or ethnic specificity but volunteering for a perpetual struggle for righteousness. The reason for this is that spirituality is a proven medium to reach the roots or psyche of a being. Keeping in view the efforts for peace, the results are not encouraging and now it looks more a slogan or a worked out strategy and less rooted in spirit or expressed in needed spiritual culture. This is almost resulted in politics of peace. It will be relevant to point out here that even the peace problem taken up by different spiritualities looks buried under the ethno-specificities, which never allowed the concerned humans to transcend their cultural or ethnic boundaries. It is why the interfaith understanding till date is unable to agree on even minimum common programme? Here I want to record in this context that Sikhism though youngest among world religions, has inbuilt possibilities to provide a solid ground for much needed common model for interfaith or human understanding through *Sabad-Guru* methodology. This is being termed here as Sikh model for universal consciousness.

The claim among all spiritualities for universal concerns is no doubt common but in practice, at their religious levels, not only they do not agree with each other and along with this most of them are sticking to their exclusive religious concerns also. It is why they are also regularly contesting for their religious supremacy even through interfaith dialogue. Such religious concerns of different spiritualities forced them for unhealthy competitions also. It goes on resulting in blocking the possibilities of universal consciousness in spiritual sense. The concept of conversion is rooted in such religious concerns and confirms the notion of exclusive excellence. Such religious limitations has nothing to do with

spirituality and these should be considered the religious specificities of different shades such as ethnic or geographical etc. It always ends in dogmatism which definitely blocks spiritual flowering of peace. So apparently it looks paradoxical, when advocates of religions try to talk about spiritual consciousness but actually they are advocating their religious specificities. Reason is that it is not easy to carry the theory and practice together unless these are harmonized in spiritual spirit. So the harmonization of theory and practice becomes primary concern for creating the possibilities of universal consciousness aiming at interfaith understanding to world peace. There is no doubt in this that code of conduct in any religion always remains the local concern of the religion in reference, because of its roots in the culture of the community concerned. This part of any religion can never be a part of Revelation of the concerned religion. If it is so then the Revelation has to be defined afresh and for this Sikh Revelation *Bani* can guide us. What is "*AMAJBE*" in *Jaap Sahib* for Guru Gobind Singh is "*Dhur ki Bani*" for Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Revelation in spirit is infallible guiding force (*Sabad Guru*) because of its inherent transcendence of religious boundaries. So the tension between theory and practice is almost the fate of every religion. Religious scholarship when takes up theory of one religion and compare it with the practice of other religion, then the tendentious academics become inevitable. Such efforts can not be termed either spiritual or healthy because such closed religious approaches always end in religious dogmatism. Communal reaction is also a corollary of it. In Sikh practice all this is strictly prohibited. It is why every Sikh in his daily prayer commits to the well-being of humanity (*Sarbat da bhala*). It became handy with so many religions, which believe in conversion that their salvation model is rooted in past and can flower only in future. The present of any human being they think is for committing to their specific model, which automatically rules out the possibilities of all embracing

model, a need of the humanity in the contemporary situation. This in the language of Guru Nanak and a central concern of *Sabad* model is the need of a Preceptor who can bind the humanity in union.³ It is a commitment not to Nanak but to a model which is rooted in spirit and transcends any sort of specificity. The spirit inherent in it is that the sort of ideal you commit, will give you the life you live.⁴ This is being discussed as infallible *Sabad* model which can result in universal consciousness.

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Multi-Dimensional Aspect of Peace in *Guru Granth Sahib*

Shashi Bala*

Mankind, in the present era, is passing through a phase of utter chaos and confusion due to the increasing disharmony in human relations both at the microscopic as well as at the macroscopic levels. No doubt, the advancement of global telecommunication system have brought the world closer to such an extent that the behavior of an individual vies-avis nation affects the whole world. The pertinent question arises, where lies the crisis. What is its cause and where can the solution to this crisis be found. The crux of the problem lies in the complete erosion of time-tested values giving rise to inner conflict between good and evil, virtues and vices, self-sacrifice and greed, tolerance and rigidity, religious co-existence and fundamentalism. This type of moral crisis within the individual affects his outer surroundings and thereby causing bloodshed and message in the name of caste, creed, religion and boundaries of nations. The search for peace is not only an international issue but is more relevant rather most crucial in relations existing between class, racial and ethnic groups. This problem can be visualized from two levels via, the interpersonal level dealing with internal peace of mind and the interpersonal level relating to fellowship relations in family and in social sphere.

The Holy Scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*, enunciates the concept of oneness of God and affirms the sanctity of whole existence. It stresses on the cultivation of universal values to

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promote peace in the whole universe. The approach of the Holy Scripture is holistic and integrative with emphasis on the dynamic and comprehensive aspect of reality with a pragmatic vision to socialize religion by envisaging the sovereign self-identity of man as well as the collective amelioration of social conditions in the present world.

This paper is a humble attempt to study the multiple dimensions of peace in *Guru Granth Sahib*. It will highlight first the meaning of peace at the microscopic level; second peace at the macroscopic level in interpersonal relations and third the relation of microscopic and macroscopic levels to promote world peace.

I

The concept of peace has undergone considerable changes and if we try to explore its meaning in different traditions, we will find a bewildering variety of usages of this term. Generally, peace is defined as an integrated state of mind or an attitude of equilibrium, serenity or inner tranquility and not a state of sensual satisfaction or physical comfort. It is also a state of inner radiance symbolizing the union of self with the larger order of universe. There are two types of views about peace i.e. negative and positive. The former states the absence of violence and the latter indicates to a harmonious state of mind and 'the presence of a non-violent type of egalitarian, non-exploitative and non-suppressive cooperation between dissimilar individual units and nations.'¹ Hence the meaning of peace is not clear in its implication. To some, it implies only the absence of war or the organized military violence and to others, it implies a state of law and order devoid of all conflicts and thereby serving as 'a panacea by means of which all human antagonisms are resolved.'²

Peace, in moral terms, may be defined as the highest good and an actual possibility for man. Speaking about the normative character of peace, Prof. Avtar Singh defines peace as 'the form and ideal and not mere description of some

civilization in the distant past or of contemporary social life.³ He further adds that peace 'is not a state of society but a living relation; not something which prevails but something which lives.'⁴ In fact the search for peace is interrelated with the action for peace and the former fails to acquire relevance in segregation from the latter. A search for peace should lead not only to the designation of action but to concrete action.⁵

In *Guru Granth Sahib*, peace is defined as absence of maladies, sins and ailments and attainment of a blissful state.⁶ Hence peace as a blessing vouchsafed to the individual soul implies a condition of inner integrity, soundness and well-being of man. It is the culmination of joy as the fruition of God and appears in the form of poise, peace and ecstasy. Often the words *shanti*, *sukh*, *sehaj* and *anand* occur together and as synonyms to depict a similar state of mind known as *sehaj avastha*.⁷ This state is variously defined in the holy scripture. In *Sukhmani Sahib*, a person in this state of mind, is called as *brahmgyani* who remains detached in the world (*nirlep*), looks upon all alike (*drisht samana*), treats both friends and foes alike (*mitr satr samana*) and abides ever in the joy of *sehaj* (*sukh sehaj nivas*)⁸. Such person rises above the affliction of suffering and remains unaffected by the pain and pleasure, honor and dishonor, attachment and detachment, and transcends himself from self-centered inclinations.⁹

Now the question arises, how is it possible for man to attain this state of mind? The first prerequisite in our search for peace is to know it at the intrapersonal level i.e. within oneself. The physical constituent of man i.e. body is ever changing and is a temporary habitation for an eternal soul. It is an admitted fact of modern psychology that the conscious mind is more or less, a reflection of our deep-rooted inner tendencies, which are stated in the Holy Scripture, in the form of accumulated effect of past deeds. Hence the external world is a reflection of our inner self and the condition of our inner self have consequential effect on our surroundings. A peaceful and harmonious person will certainly radiate peace and

harmony and vice versa. It is, therefore, the individual who is the basic unit of the whole cosmos and peace means the liberation of individual from all that impedes his self-realization. In this sense, peace should be primarily 'the science of human fulfillment not of national aggrandizement, not even of international architectonics.'¹⁰

The solution to the problem of world peace lies in studying the problem at the microscopic level. The basis of a harmonious family, society and even world is the inner harmony of man. Is it possible for any person to bring peace and harmony to his environment, if he himself is not peaceful and harmonious within? The UNESCO charter says, 'wars start in the minds of men' and it is right to say that peace also starts in the minds of men. The only foundation for peaceful co-existence lies in the right state of mind. So it is indispensable to be aware of the real and pristine nature of man and this awareness will certainly be a right step to promote peace. The main cause of unrest lies in the five evil inclinations of mind, namely, lust, wrath, infatuation, avarice and pride.'¹¹ These self-kindred inclinations give rise to conflict of interests and appear in the form of 'hostility, pride, conceit, callousness, vindictiveness, arrogance, false prestige and many other disruptive tendencies which turn society into a battle-ground of opposing forces.'¹²

The variant religious traditions have suggested different methods to do away with these inclinations. This is possible either by surrender to God or by expansion of ourselves or by extinction of ourselves. The sense of false self is denominated in *Guru Granth Sahib* as *haumai*, which is a serious malady but the significant point to note here is that it is caused by God Himself and therefore, its remedy lies in realizing its true nature.'¹³ The implication is that the Sikh religion never recommends the complete negation of ego. Nevertheless, if peace is attained by the process of extinction of self, the question may arise, what type of peace it will indicate? *Guru Granth Sahib* does not advocate the idea to

establish this type of peace of the grave or a peace in which all individuality, all personal character and all types of social relationships will become extinct. The crucial point in the holy scripture is mentioned as the Tran valuation of ego-consciousness into the universal or cosmic consciousness, whereby ego does not lose its effectiveness, but acts as an instrument of God. Consequently, the realization of inner peace lies in sublimating the inclinations, singing the praises of God, meeting with the divine preceptor (Guru) by whose instruction mind becomes sublime, cool and tranquil.¹⁴ The person, with tranquil mind, face the outward obstructions with his inner strength and shines 'by the process of *nam* in solemn action, as perfumes rise only when the rose is in bloom.'¹⁵

II

To maintain and to promote peace at the macroscopic level, it is essential to know the conditions of peace in the interpersonal relationships. What can be the cause of disharmony in the inter-personal relationships?

Peace is defined as a state of mind in which man is integrated with himself and with his fellows. Stating the significance of fellowship relations, Thomas Merton observes:

Where there is no love of man, no love of life (there) then make all the laws you want, all the edicts and treaties, issue all the anathemas, set up all, the safeguards and inspections, fill the air with spying satellites and hang cameras on the moon.

As long as you see your fellowmen as a being essentially to be feared, mistrusted, hatred and destroyed, there cannot be peace on earth.¹⁶

A fundamental area of human relationships is family that remains the basic social unit, inspire of, the changed standards of living. Family, no doubt, is the bedrock of society and serves as an experimental workshop to cultivate the virtues of understanding, love and compassion. There are two dimensions of family bonds via, the relationship of husband and wife and the relationship of parents and children.¹⁷ During the

modern period, there is an ever-growing strife and tension in both types of relations. The first is envisaged in terms of gender inequality and the second is seen in terms of generation gap. If the family relationships are full of conflict and struggle we can hardly make any contribution towards establishing peace in the social sphere. Any expression of our negative relations is to be seen as the result of an accumulation of stress. Speaking about the solution to peace in family relationships. Dr. Ginott opines that 'the peaceful home, like the hoped for warless world, does not depend on a sudden benevolent change in human nature. It does depend on deliberate procedures that methodically reduce tensions before they lead to explosions.'¹⁸

In *Guru Granth Sahib*, the sanctification of married life is endorsed by the frequent use of the metaphor of husband-wife relationship to indicate the love of individual soul for God, which is to be attained by cultivating peace and by surrender of ego.¹⁹ The basis of peaceful and healthy family life is true love which consists of not being together but of being two frames as manifesting one light.²⁰ No type of subordination of man and woman is tolerated in the holy scripture, which insists on the woman to inculcate the virtues of contentment, peace and humbleness²¹ and to practice self-containment, pious conduct and obedience.²² Man is also endowed with the moral responsibility to be faithful to his wife and whosoever abandons his wife and has affair with another woman is called sinner, whose home always burns in unquenched fire.²³ What is needed, is the spontaneous expression of inherent values which provide the basis for positive giving and receiving. The inner tranquility can alone make possible the spontaneous expression of positive love, and it demands the inner conversion by controlling the mind, sublimating the passions and cultivating the positive virtues.

In the social sphere, peace does not mean tolerance or forbearance but an equations positive state of human relations. What constitutes a society is in fact, the combination of

different religious communities, caste-groups, linguistic groups and professional groups. Each of these can contribute to the growth of social solidarity and can also be the cause of social conflict. Speaking of the difference between direct violence and structural violence, Johan Ginott observes that direct violence is 'caused by concrete persons, committing acts of destruction against other persons' and structural violence is built into the social structure in the form of inequality and it takes expression in terms of 'differential life expectancy'. The fight for structural violence is an equally legitimate concern for promoting peace.²⁴ In *Guru Granth Sahib*, we find a deep concern for this type of violence in its different remit fictions viz., caste-system, corruption or deprivation of other's rights.

Hence peace in *Guru Granth Sahib*, is not envisaged as a state of passive quietism or as synonymous with blissful sloth but is a social-oriented state. Emphasizing on the individual and social dimensions of peace in the holy scripture, Prof. Wazir Singh opines that at the spiritual level, 'it orients the individual to a blissful state of equipoise' and at the social level 'it stands for peace and non-violence'.²⁵ But non-violence, in Sikhism, is associated with martyrdom and not with the non-killing asceticism of earlier traditions. The suffering for the sake of truth and principles, being the foundation of the Sikh character, it stresses on that aspect of peace behind which lies 'a tremendous struggle with pain, culminating in victory'.²⁶ In a similar tone, Prof. Puran Singh explains peace, 'as a rose blooming amid thorns'.²⁷

There is no denial of the fact that the stress of *Guru Granth Sahib* is on the regulation of human relations by the spiritual principles. There are three main precepts in Sikhism, viz., *nam japna*, *Kirat karna* and *vand chhakna*. It neither advocates the philosophy of pacifism nor withdrawal from active life but inculcates the spirit of selfless action. The question arises, how does the implementation of these precepts contribute to promote peace at the macroscopic level. Prof. Puran Singh has given a beautiful universal interpretation

of these precepts. He observes that 'Kirat Karni' means work inspired by the spirit of holiness and this work includes 'gathering bread for hungry mouths, providing solace to the sick, clothing the naked and making the burden of suffering light for humanity by completely losing our individual selfishness, *Nam Japna*, he interprets as 'being capable of active divinity in inspirational touch with the enviable divine spirit and *Vand Chhakna* is 'to share our bread and joy and love and attainment of God-Realization with all'.²⁸ This clearly paves the way to universal passion for peace that is not a life of possession but of distribution aiming at self-sovereignty as the true culture of man and the state.

III

To establish a parallelism between microscopic and macroscopic level, man needs a broader vision and deep intuitive insight to perceive the depth meaning of existence at all levels. The idea of world peace and search for it is neither a mere mystical vision of divine preceptors nor is an idealist utopia of philosophers but is the dire necessity for the very survival of human existence. How is it possible for man to enter into an existential relationship with other fellow beings and the world at large?

The approach of *Guru Granth Sahib* towards peace is not theoretical or conceptual but it initiates a plan of action. Peace is a multi-facet accomplishment and no single institution or a set of human relationships can maintain and promote peace which, nonetheless, is the cooperative task of all of them. Like war and violence, peace is a disposition of mind that determines the human will and leads to conscious activity. It will not appear strange to say that peace is the outcome of intentional human action and it may be defined as complex, collective and social achievement, which requires the complete transformation of man's attitude. This inner transformation is possible in and through society and the holy scripture advocates on the one hand the life of householder and the

company of saints or holy congregation on the other hand.²⁹ To maintain peace at all levels, the need is not only to abide by the values but also 'Transvaluation of values' which means that in the hierarchy of values, placing the values of justice and disinterested service as the first order values.³⁰

The central idea in the holy scripture revolves around the socio-spiritual realization of man. No distinction is made between the contemplative life and social service, rather spiritual orientation leads to social orientation. The ideal love for God inculcates the love for the whole mankind. This type of love requires inner and outer surrender that means complete dedication and dependence on God and faith in the operation of divine justice. This type of surrender does not lead to inner emptiness or to a state of nothingness but it enlarges the self by liberating it from its finitude. To such person appears no difference between creeds and denomination and he transcends all types of group rivalries and dissensions that disintegrate the human society. The holy scripture stresses on the practice of altruism and this altruistic spirit finds expression in the ideal of self-sacrifice, which does not mean self-negation or self-denial but it is self-transcendence or dying to live. It indicates to a life of detachment, expansion of consciousness, elimination of fear and service for the welfare of humanity (*Sarbat da Bhala*).

The altruistic spirit also finds expression in two ways via, the individual centered altruism and the social-centered altruism. The former is related with the welfare of an individual, while the latter is concerned with the charge or reformation of unjust social organisations.³¹ To maintain peace at the macroscopic level, the society centered altruistic motivation is most urgently needed and this type of spirit is explicitly clear in *Guru Granth Sahib* which initiates the possibility of inter-faith dialogue with diverse types of religious and social groups, without any sign of conflict or an idea of conversion but the sole purpose being to convince them to transcend above the ritualistic and external formalism

and to understand the inner depth meaning of their respective faiths. Moreover, the idea of universal brotherhood³², cooperation and love³³ and the stress on the conformity of inner belief and outward conduct imparts a dynamic and spiritual orientation to human relationships.

To conclude, the cause of the present crisis is lack of faith in the spirit of man and this leads, on the one hand, to the distortion of values, escapism and collapse of man in despair, frustration and helplessness and on the other hand to social conflict, exploitation, hatred, enmity and violence. The philosophy of *Guru Granth Sahib* is universal, dynamic and deeply humanistic. Its catholic and cosmopolitan spirit is envisioned in the inclusion of hymns of medieval saints that provide ecumenical character to the holy scripture which, indeed, is a repository of spiritual insights for the whole world. If we follow, rather practice the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib* in a true and sincere way, we can find that spiritual solace which is the deepest urge of human soul and is most urgently needed to maintain peace both at the microscopic and at the macroscopic level.

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Guru Granth Sahib : Contribution To World Peace And Harmony

Harnam Singh Shan*

It was in 1979 that the third World Conference on Religion and Peace, held at Princeton in United States of America, resolved and declared as follows :

We believe that, as religious people, we have special responsibility for building a peaceful world community and a special contribution to make.

We realize that far too often the names of our various religions have been used in warfare and community strife. Now we must reverse this, in short by :

1. Breaking down barriers of prejudices and hostility between religious communities and institutions :
2. Confronting the powers of the world with the word of the teachings of our religions, rather than conforming to them when they do wrong and act contrary to the well-being of humanity.
3. Building inter-religious understanding and community among ourselves on local level, particularly where prejudices run strong.

We all acknowledge restraint and self-discipline in a community of giving and forgiving, love as basic to human life and the form of true blessedness.

We are all commanded by our faiths to seek justice in the world in a community of free and equal persons. In this search, conscience is given to every person as a moral guide to the ways of truth among us all.¹

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The basic principles, enunciated by the prophet-preceptors of the Sikh religion and incorporated by them in its sacred scripture, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* in 1604 for the achievement of this ideal, are astonishingly and pleasingly similar to those mentioned above.

2

The Sikh Masters demonstrated these during their lifetimes (1469-1708), both through their oral and written utterances, as preserved by them in their original form and spirit in the Holy Volume. They visualised, preached and practised such as religion which initiated and successfully pursued the performance of all those functions in the best interests of humanity at large. They proved, both by precept and practice, that it knows no ethical, racial or regional limitations ; recognises no distinctions on account of birth, sex, caste, creed, calling, colour or country ; and embodies, on the other hand, universal respect and concern for all, regarding all as free, equal and respectable persons. Its founder, Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), indentifying himself with the lowliest of the creatures, advised all and sundry :

ਸਭ ਤੇ ਉਚਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਨੀਚ ਨ ਦੀਸੈ ਕੋਇ ॥

ਇਕਨਾ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਸਾਜਿਐ ਇਕੁ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਤਿਹੁ ਲੋਇ ॥²

Call everyone high (noble)

for, none seems low (mean),

As God, the only 'Potter' (maker),

has fashioned all 'vessels' (people) alike.

And it is his light alone

that shines in all creations.²

Bhagat Kabir (1398-1448) whose contribution to the Holy *Granth* is the largest among all non-Sikh saints and sufis included there in, also maintained likewise :

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ ॥³

God, at first, created his light ;

then all people were made from it.

As the entire world
Has come from that one light,
Then who are superior, who inferior ?³

Emphasising this cardinal principle, of equality and fraternity arising out of their firm faith in the unicity of the Creator and His creation, as the basic need for maintaining peace and obtaining harmonious relationship between various sections of society, Guru Nanak pronounced :

ਐ ਜੀ ਨਾ ਹਮ ਉਤਮ ਨੀਚ ਨ ਮਧਿਮ
ਹਰਿ ਸਰਣਾਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਲੋਗ ॥⁴
We, who have taken shelter with God,
are God's own people, O friend !
We are neither high-caste, nor low-caste,
nor of the middling state.⁴

As for himself, he stated in utter humility :
ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚ ॥
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ ॥⁵
I myself am one among the innumerable ones,
rather the lowliest of the lowly.
and I seek the kinship of the lowliest,
the lowest among the low-born ;
For, emulation of the high-born is in vain.⁵

In order to "build inter-religious understanding" he therefore, exhorted people belonging to different persuasions and dispensations :

ਆਈ ਪੰਥੀ ਸਗਲ ਜਮਾਤੀ.....⁶
Let universal brotherhood be
The highest aspiration of your religious order.⁶

3

As regards "breaking down the barriers of prejudice and hostility", Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606), the holy compiler-cum-editor of this sacred Volume, underlining such a radical concept of unity, fraternity and universality, went to the extent of asserting :

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਮੇਰਾ ਦੁਸਮਨੁ ਰਹਿਆ ਨਾ ਹਮ ਕਿਸ ਕੇ ਬੈਰਾਈ॥.....

ਸਭ ਕੋ ਮੀਤੁ ਹਮ ਆਪਨ ਕੀਨਾ ਹਮ ਸਭਨਾ ਕੇ ਸਾਜਨ॥⁷

Neither is any my foe, nor am I enemy of any.....

I have made all and sundry my loving friends,

And I am a friend of one and all.⁷

Just two years before he was tortured to death in 1606 under specific orders of Jahangir, the then Mughal Emperor of India, he even recorded this assertion in the Holy *Granth* itself :

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ।....

X X X

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਏਕੈ ਪੇਖਿ ਪੇਖਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਗਸਾਈ।⁸

None is our enemy,

Nor is anyone stranger to us.

We are in cordial accord with one and all.

The one God pervades all

Seeing Him, I am in bloom of joy.⁸

Thus, the Sikh Gurus broke down, centuries ago, the said “barriers of prejudice and hostility”, not only “between religious communities and institutions” but also between all individuals who constitute these.

4

Keeping such catholic aspirations and universal convictions in view, the Sikh Gurus also “confronted the powers of the world with the work of the teachings of their religion rather than conformed to them they acted contrary to the well-being of humanity”, as exhorted in the above statement of the said World Conference on Religion and Peace. Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of the Sikh religion, not only “confronted”, in 1521, the invading Emperor Babar, founder of the Mughal Empire in India, but also called him the ‘regent of death’; condemned the tyrannical deeds of his hordes and voiced the agony of the oppressed humanity in some of the most heart-rending hymns contained in *Guru Granth Sahib*, as given below for instance :

ਪਾਪ ਕੀ ਜੰਵ ਲੈ ਕਾਬਲਹੁ ਧਾਇਆ ਜੋਰੀ ਮੰਗੈ ਦਾਨ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥

X X X

ਖੂਨ ਕੇ ਸੋਹਿਲੇ ਗਾਵੀਅਹਿ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਰਤੁ ਕਾ ਕੁੰਗੂ ਪਾਇ, ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥⁹

Babar, the Mughal, has rushed from Kabul,

with the wedding party of sins ;

And demands, in forced marriage,

the surrender of our womanhood.....

The paeons of blood are being sung,

And blood is being sprinkled

for saffron on the wedded ones.⁹

ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ

ਸਚੁ ਸੁਣਾਇਸੀ ਸਚੁ ਕੀ ਬੋਲਾ ॥¹⁰

Nanak utters the word of truth ;

He utters the truth, for, now is the time

to utter the truth.¹⁰

ਖੁਰਾਸਾਨ ਖਸਮਾਨਾ ਕੀਆ ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨ ਡਰਾਇਆ ॥

ਏਤੀ ਮਾਰ ਪਈ ਕੁਰਲਾਣੇ ਤੈਂ ਕੀ ਦਰਦ ਨ ਆਇਆ ॥

ਕਰਤਾ ਤੂੰ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਾ ਸੋਈ ॥

ਜੇ ਸਕਤਾ ਸਕਤੇ ਕਉ ਮਾਰੇ ਤਾ ਮਨਿ ਰੋਸੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਸਕਤਾ ਸੀਹੁ ਮਾਰੇ ਪੈ ਵਗੇ ਖਸਮੇ ਸਾ ਪੁਰਸਾਈ।.....¹¹

You, O God ! saved Khurasan from Babar's invasion

and have let loose terror on Hindustan,

The people were tortured so ruthlessly

that they, in agony, cried to heaven.

Did it not awake any compassion

for them in You, O Lord ?

You, O Creator, who belong to all, pray listen :

If the powerful one smites another equally powerful,
our mind is not much grieved over it.

But when a tiger falls upon a herd of kine,

then the Master of the herd must answer for it.¹¹

Guru Nanak not only "confronted" the invaders and appealed to the Creator-of-all in such touching and dynamic verses, but also rebuked the then rulers (viz. Lodhi Pathans)

of Hindustan for their not putting up a stiff fight for it, and allowing such a precious gem (i.e. India) to be ravaged and snatched away so easily. It was so because they :

ਸਾਹਾ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਗਵਾਈਆ ਰੰਗਿ ਤਮਾਸੇ ਚਾਇ ॥

ਬਾਬਰਵਾਣੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਈ ਕੁਇਰੁ ਨ ਰੋਟੀ ਖਾਇ ॥¹²

The rulers had lost their senses

in the pursuit of sensuous pleasures.

Now, when Bahar's command has gone abroad,¹²

Even their own princes go about without a crust.

The Guru not only exposed their betrayal of trust and moral degradation, but also their administrative set-up in no less forceful terms, such as these :

ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ ਮੁਕਦਮ ਕੁਤੇ ਜਾਇ ਜਗਾਇਨਿ ਬੈਠੇ ਸੁਤੇ ॥

ਚਾਕਰ ਨਹਦਾ ਪਾਇਨਿ ਘਾਉ, ਰਤੁ ਪਿਤੁ ਕੁਤਿਹੋ ਚਟਿ ਜਾਹੁ ॥¹³

The rulers are turned tigers and their officers hounds.

They do not let people to rest in peace.

Their servants wound them with their claws.

And lick up all the blood and marrow that is split.¹³

Guru Arjan Dev, whose own contribution to the content of *Guru Granth Sahib* is the largest, pronounced the following 'Divine Manifesto' when, during his time and pontificate, people were threatened with another onslaught on their life, honour and fundamental rights :

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣੁ ਦਾ ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕਿਸੈ ਰਵਾਣਦਾ ॥

ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਵੁਠੀਆ ਇਹ ਹੋਆ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੀਉ ॥

The gracious Lord has now

promulgated his Ordinances :

None shall domineer over others

or cause pain to them.

All shall abide in peace and joy,

as the governance shall be gentle and compassionate."¹⁴

While preaching their message of amity, unity, equality, love and truth on the one hand, and also confronting the native and foreign "powers of the world" so candidly and courageously, on the other ; the Sikh Gurus also roused the

conscience of the people to make them fearless, good and true ; and endeavoured to take them on the path that led to God's presence. But denial of freedom and suppression of human dignity by the government of the day, obstructed that peaceful common path. In order, therefore, to safeguard that path, to uphold the freedom of conscience ; and to defend human rights on the one hand, and to uproot intolerance, indignity and tyranny on the other, two of its holy contributors - Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) - laid down their lives in 1606 and 1675, respectively, under specific orders of the then Mughal emperors - Jahangir (1569-1627) and Aurangzeb (1618-1707) - of the Indian subcontinent. Mentioning the cause and effect of the unique and supreme sacrifice made by the latter for this very purpose, the contemporary evidence tells :

The Divine Master (i.e. Guru Tegh Bahadur)
protected their¹⁶ religious right to apply frontal
caste-marks and wear sacred threads.¹⁷
He performed thereby
a great feat in this Age of Darkness.
He went to the utmost limit¹⁸
for the sake of the men of faith.
He gave away his head
without uttering even the whisper of a groan.
He endured this unique martyrdom
for the cause of Truth and protection of faith.
He readily offered his head for sacrifice,
but didn't give up his ideal and conviction¹⁹
(He, Guru Teg Bahadur, refused to perform
any miracle as, according to him),
display of such miraculous powers
or performance of bogus tricks and petty practices
would be a shame for the men of God.
He smashed the potsherd of his life
on the head of the king of Delhi²⁰
and departed for the Abode of God.

None else has ever performed a feat
as noble and great as Teg Bahadur.²¹

5

The Sikh prophet-teachers did all that, thus, to promote those lofty ideals which, as projected in *Guru Granth Sahib*, equate the Supreme Lord with Truth and Love of Him with Service of Humanity. They also enjoined upon all human beings mutual love and understanding on the one hand, and truthful living and social responsibility on the other, invoking thereby both social service and social action. They believed, as is stated thus in *Guru Granth Sahib*, that :

Devoted Service to God and Humanity :

ਜੇਤੇ ਜੀਅ ਤੇਰੇ ਸਭਿ ਤੇਰੇ ਵਿਣੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਫਲੁ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾਹੀ॥

All living beings are Your own creatures.

But none can obtain any reward
without rendering devoted service
to Your created ones.²²

ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਐ ਤਾਂ ਦਰਗਹਿ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ॥

A resting place at the Divine Portal can be found
only through the devoted service of the people
in this world.²³

Envisioning and preaching, thus, a new cultural ethos and an ideal social order ; and emphasising social justice, obligations and service to humanity, *Guru Granth Sahib*, has all along been exhorting and asserting for the liberation of humankind from all kinds of degrading bondage-mental, spiritual, social, political and the like. Its sacred writings present unimpeachable evidence to the aims, impact and beneficence of that radical and dynamic movement which was initiated by the Sikh Gurus in the 15th century for the liberation and well-being of all human beings. Thus spoke Guru Arjan Dev, the founder of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, while summing up its impact and influence :

ਫੁਟੇ ਆਂਡਾ ਭਰਮ ਕਾ ਮਨਹਿ ਭਇਓ ਪਰਗਾਸੁ॥

ਕਾਟੀ ਬੇਰੀ ਪਗਹ ਤੇ ਗੁਰ ਕੀਨੀ ਬੰਦਿ ਖਲਾਸੁ॥

The egg-shell of doubt has shattered
and the mind is illuminated.

The Master has freed us from bondage
by putting off fetters from our feet.²⁴

As regards the third postulate of the above statement of the World Conference on Religion and Peāce, the Ten Sikh Gurus, *Guru Granth Sahib* and their teachings have always been striving to build inter-religious understanding in our local communities, particularly where prejudices run strong. The well-known historian, Sir Arnold Toynbee, tells us : "The Indian and the Judiac religions are notoriously different in spirit ; and where they have met, they have sometimes behaved like oil and vinegar. Their principal meeting-ground has been India, where Islam has impugned on Hinduism violently. On the whole, the story of relations between these two great religions on the Indian ground has been an unhappy tale of mutual misunderstanding and hostility. Yet, on both sides of this religious barrier, there has been a minority of discerning spirits who have seen that, at bottom Hinduism and Islam are each an expression of the same fundamental religious truth, and that these two expressions are therefore reconcilable with each other and are of supreme value when brought into harmony". "The Sikh Religion", he adds, "might be described, not inaccurately, as a vision of this Hindu-Muslim common ground. To have discovered and embraced the deep harmony underlying the historic Hindu-Muslim discord has been a noble spiritual triumph; and Sikhs may well be proud of their religion's ethos and origin."²⁵ According to Dr. Sir Radhakrishnan too, the blessed founder of their religion, Guru Nanak, "Strove to bring Hindus and Muslims together. His life and teachings were a symbol of the harmony between the two communities. A popular verse describes him as a 'Guru for the Hindus and a Pir for the Muslims :

"Baba Nanak Shah Faquir.

Hindu Ka Guru, Musalman ka Pir."

This was in spite of the glaring fact that “He was critical of the formalism of both the Hindus and the Muslims”²⁶ and his historic thunderblast, when he took up the mission of his life, was :

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਹੈ ਨਾ ਕੋ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਹੈ ॥²⁶

There is neither a Hindu Nor a Muslim.²⁷

(All are human beings, born of the
One Supreme Being).

It was Guru Arjan Dev, the holy compiler of this sacred Volume, who in a single hymn, indicative of his cosmopolitan attitude and universal goodwill, using a good number of attributive names of God, drawn from both the Hindu (e.g. Jagannath, Rishikesh, Narhar, Gopal, etc.) and the Muslim (e.g. Maula, Allah, Khaliq, Khuda, etc.) traditions, and shattering the age-old doubts and illusions about His name, declared as its end :

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਿ ਖੋਏ ਭਰਮ ਏਕੋ ਅਲਹੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ॥²⁷

The Master has lifted my illusion

(About the name of God and has enabled me to realise)

That *Allah* (Muslim name of God)

and *Par-Brahm* (Hindu name of God)

are one and identical.²⁷

It was he, again, who transcending all sectarian biases and parochial limits, and using a composite name, *Allah-Rama*, for God, also proclaimed unequivocally :

ਵਰਤ ਨ ਰਹਉ ਨ ਮਹਿ ਰਮਦਾਨਾ ॥

ਤਿਸੁ ਸੇਵੀ ਜੋ ਰਖੇ ਨਿਦਾਨਾ ॥

ਏਕੁ ਗੁਸਾਈ ਅਲਹੁ ਮੇਰਾ ॥

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਨਬੇਰਾ ॥

ਹਜ ਕਾਬੈ ਜਾਉ ਨ ਤੀਰਥ ਪੂਜਾ ॥

ਏਕੋ ਸੇਵੀ, ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੂਜਾ ॥

ਪੂਜਾ ਕਰਉ ਨ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਗੁਜਾਰਉ ॥

ਏਕ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਲੇ ਰਿਦੈ ਨਮਸਕਾਰਉ ॥

ਨ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥

ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੈ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ ॥....²⁹

I neither observe fasting (like a Hindu)
nor keep the fast during Ramdan (like a Muslim)
for, I serve only Him who saves at the last.
The Gosain of the Hindus and Allah of the Muslims
are one and the same to me ;
for, I have found release from the rituals of both.
I neither go to Kaaba to perform the Hajj
nor to Hindu pilgrim-stations for
ritual bathing and worship
for, I serve only the One God, and no other.
I neither worship in the Hindu way,
nor say prayers like the Muslims,
for, I bow, within my heart, only to that
One Formless Lord.
We are neither Hindus nor Muslims
for, our body and soul belong to the
One Supreme Being,
who alone is both *Rama* and *Allah* for us.²⁹

To make such a revolutionary pronouncement and record it in one's sacred scripture in a commonly surcharged and racially divided atmosphere during an intolerant alien rule, speaks highly of the deep concern and sincere efforts made by him in the cause of peace and amity, for the promotion of inter-faith understanding and harmonious relationship, and for the development of "a peaceful world community".

7

Guru Granth Sahib transcends not only such religious barriers, mutual hostility and strong prejudices, but also all types of religious exclusiveness, dogmatism, formalism, chauvinism and egocentric individualism. It preaches that God, the Creator of all, being one and all people being His Own Creation, there is therefore only one basic religion for the whole humanity ; and that religion is Truth which can be adopted and practised by anybody, any time, anywhere. Expressing this conviction in very clear terms, it states :

ਏਕੋ ਧਰਮੁ ਦਿੜੇ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਈ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਪੂਰਾ ਜੁਗਿ ਜੁਗਿ ਸੋਈ ॥
 He, who grasps the Truth, realizes that
 As the Creator is One and
 is ever the same age after age,
 There is, therefore, One religion of all mankind.³⁰

Enunciating its own concept of that One religion of all mankind and the definition of its true adherent, it also observes :

Religion consists not in mere talk.
 He who looks on all alike
 and considers all as equals.
 May be acclaimed as truly religious.³¹

Indicating also the way to such an ideal and equalitarian religion, it maintains :

The way to true religion is found
 by dwelling in God.
 And remaining detached
 in the midst of worldly attachments.
 (like a lotus in water).³²

Guru Granth Sahib has given optimistic hope to every person belonging to any caste or creed, sex or stratum-for his or her liberation even when he or she is alive in this very world :

Khatris, Brahmans, Vaishyas and Sudras
 all can swim across the Ocean of Existence,
 through loving devotion to the Name of One Lord.³³

It can be surely attained while leading a normal householder's life of virtuous conduct, remembering God, adoring His Nature, doing honest work, performing social and familial duties, earning livelihood and sharing earning with the needy, as opposed to pursuing enforced celibacy or barren asceticism and mortification of the body to obtain it. So said Guru Nanak Dev Ji :

One can attain salvation
 even while living a normal domestic life.³⁴

Guru Granth Sahib has addressed itself, thus, to the common man of the world and not to an ascetic or a recluse. It has brought religion out of the cloister and related it to the living beings and to the realities of life, adding a noble ideal, practical approach and social meaning to its fold. It advises and tells them, for instance :

- I. We should keep on communicating
with the fellow-beings,
So long as we live in the world.³⁵
- II. ਮਿਥਿਆ ਤਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਮਿਥਿਆ ਬਾਸ ਲੇਤਿ ਬਿਕਾਰਾ ॥
The human body
that does not do good to others, is worthless.³⁶
- III. ਮਿਠਤੁ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਗੁਣ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਤਤੁ ॥
Sweetness and humility are
the essence of all virtues and good qualities.³⁷
- IV. ਸਚਹੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥
Truth is higher than everything else ;
But higher by far is the truthful living.³⁸
- V. ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥
Why revile woman,
from whom even kings and greatmen are born.³⁹

The aim and object of such instructions and exhortations has obviously been the all-round uplift and welfare of humankind through love, devotion, service and righteous deeds, contributing to universal peace, pleasure and prosperity. They embody the message of unity equality, compassion, tolerance and non-violence ; and evince socialistic and altruistic approach which is one of optimism, faith and joy in natural phenomena. They also enjoin upon its followers truthful living and social responsibility, invoking both social service and beneficent action, as advised in the following verse by the Founder of Sikh religion :

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕੁ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥

They alone have known the right way

who eat the fruit of their own toil
and share it with those in need.⁴⁰

These and all other counsels, teachings and exhortations of *Guru Granth Sahib* are meant not only for its adherents but also for the whole humanity, as is stated in the following verse :

ਪਰਬਾਇ ਸਾਖੀ ਮਹਾਪੁਰਖ ਬੋਲਦੇ, ਸਾਝੀ ਸਗਲ ਜਹਾਨੈ ॥

Great men speak in the terms of the particular

But their wisdom is applicable to the whole world.⁴¹

These are also specifically addressed to various persons belonging to some particular categories, creeds and callings, etc., such as Yogis, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, farmers and traders, etc. All are advised, none criticised, to be true and firm believers in their respective faiths ; and alert, active and honest workers in their respective callings. Such sincere advice and impressive guidance to the followers of other religions and professions, etc. in the sacred scripture of one's own faith does not seem to have been given this way in the Holy Book of any other religion. Inclusion of the compositions of their 30 (23 Hindus and 7 Muslims), out of 36, teachers in its fold, is no less a unique and remarkable feature of this sacred Scripture.

9

The fervent appeals, prayers and pleadings included in *Guru Granth Sahib*, are also applicable to the entire humankind. These have been made by the Sikh Gurus to the Creator of all and sundry. For and on behalf of the whole humanity, for the maximum good of every creature, for the well-being of the whole world. They find their highest and noblest expression in verses like the following :

ਸਭੇ ਜੀਅ ਸਮਾਲਿ ਆਪਣੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਕਰੁ ॥

ਅਨੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਮੁਖ ਉਪਾਇ ਦੁਖ ਦਾਲਦੁ ਭੰਨਿ ਤਰੁ ॥

Be merciful, O God !

and keep all beings in Your care.

Let grain and water be in plenty,

shatter their suffering and penury,
and ferry them across the Ocean of Existence.⁴²

What a universal appeal embodying such a marvellous altruistic spirit, cosmopolitan outlook, liberal essence and tolerant attitude, seeking boons and blessings for the peace, prosperity and welfare of every human being, irrespective of his or her belief and faith, caste or creed, colour or country, sex or status;

10

Such prayers and teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib* have contributed considerably to the uplift and welfare of humankind by promoting goodwill, general happiness and collective moral values of the society for building a new, peaceful, prosperous and pluralistic world order, based on the vision and pattern of such an ideal city-state as is envisaged, defined and projected in its following matchless evocative hymn by Bhagat Ravidass, one of its saint-authors :

ਬੇਗਮਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ॥
ਦੁਖੁ ਅੰਦੁਹੁ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥...
ਕਾਇਮ ਦਾਇਮੁ ਸਦਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੀ ॥
ਦੋਮ ਨ ਸੋਮ ਏਕ ਸੋ ਆਹੀ ॥...
ਤਿਉ ਤਿਉ ਸੈਲ ਕਰਹਿ ਜਿਉ ਭਾਵੇ ॥
ਮਹਰਮ ਮਹਲ ਨ ਕੋ ਅਟਕਾਵੈ ॥
ਕਹਿ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਖਲਾਸ ਚਮਾਰਾ ॥
ਜੋ ਹਮ ਸਹਰੀ ਸੁ ਮੀਤੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥

The name of my city is 'griefless'.
Suffering and sorrow do not abide in it.....
Its sovereignty is firm and inviolate for ever.
There is no second or third class,
as all are alike, being in the first class....
Its residents are prosperous and contented
They go about as they please.....
no one prevents their entry into it.
So says Ravidas, the liberated cobbler,
to whom all fellow-citizens are loving friends.⁴²

Herein lies the power, modernity and universality of the revelation, thought, teaching, message and appeal of *Guru Granth Sahib* who has all along been emanating new rays of love, light and liberty ; peace, hope and happiness for all mankind all over the world. Hence, said Mrs. Pearl Buck , the Nobel Laureate, in 1962 ; “There is something strangely modern about these scriptures.....They speak to persons of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind.”...“It is impressive and significant that in the study of these Sikh scriptures we see the affirmation of the essential unity of science and religion....Through them we see a Beyond that belongs to us all. The result is a Universal Revelation.”

That is why Dr. J.C. Archer, Professor of Comparative Religion at Princeton (U.S.A), observed a bit earlier in 1946. “The Religion of the *Guru Granth* is a universal and practical religion.....The world needs today its message of peace and love”, friendship and harmony.

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2. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 62.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 1349.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 504.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
7. Alternative rendering : You shall belong to the Ayee Order (highest order of Yogis known for their spirit of accommodation) if you associate yourself with all human as your equals.
8. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p.671.
9. *Ibid.*, p.1299.
10. *Ibid.*, p.722.
11. *Ibid.*, p.723.
12. *Ibid.*, p.360.

13. *Ibid.*, p.417.
14. *Ibid.*, p.1288.
15. *Ibid.*, p.74.
16. That is, their religious Sacraments.
17. That is, of the Hindus.
18. That is, made such a unique and supreme sacrifice.
19. In the freedom of conscience and worship for everybody.
20. That is, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.
21. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 557.
22. *Ibid.*, p.394.
23. *Ibid.*, p.26.
24. *Ibid.*, p.1002.
25. In his 'Foreword' to UNESCO's, *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, London,1960, p.10.
26. In his 'Foreword' to UNESCO's, *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, London 1960, p. 21- 23.
27. *Prachin Janamsakhi*, ed. by Mr. M.A. Macauliffe, Rawalpindi, 1885, p.37.
28. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 897.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
30. *Ibid.*, p.1188.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 730,
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33. *Ibid.*, p. 1001.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 661.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 661.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 470.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 473.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 1245.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 647.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 1251.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

***Guru Granth Sahib* as a Utopia for HumanKind**

Gurbhagat Singh*

The purpose of this paper is to elaborate and distinguish the ideal world that *Guru Granth Sahib* envisions. As the paper proceeds it will become clear the word "utopia" used by some Western utopianists is inadequate for projecting the *Granth's* ideal. The word "utopia" was invented by the 15th century scholar and statesman Sir Thomas More. He combined Greek words *ou* meaning "no" and *topos* meaning "place". Utopia therefore, to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1981,p.1282) means "imaginary place with perfect social and political system's ideally perfect place or state of things". The societies of scarcity and conflict produce utopias as imaginary constructs. In pre-Christian and Christian times, Western cultures had in their folklore the idea of "Cokayne utopia" with flowing rivers of "milk and honey." (Kumar, 1987,p.9).

The first major utopian construct that the West produced was Plato's *Republic*. Plato lived from 431 B.C to 404 B.C. He grew up during the years of fierce conflict between Sparta and Athens. Written within the Parmenidian and Pythagorean tradition of understanding the universe in terms of stable being and mathematical on construction of a high rational order. The *Republic* conceives of an ideal state or city that is perfectly/ Apoloniacally organized. It is ruled by a philosopher king who can intuit the abstract forms or *eidos* of Good. He is "just, and not "tyrannical". In Book I of the *Republic*, through Thrasmychus, tyranny is defined as "the rule of one man who

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by tricks and force, puts everyone under him and takes all they have" (Plato (ed.) Richards, 1966, p.26). The last Book X ends with these words of Socrates "We will keep ever to the upward road and follow justice and reason always and in every way. That we may be friends to ourselves and to the gods" (*Ibid.*, p.196). Justice, rationality, civic life are equated by Plato. For that reason poetry as an act of being possessed and *eikastic* has not been given any space in Plato's 'Republic'. Poetry has to fall in the line of the rational order of *eidos*.

Ironically Plato's utopia that covenants in the beginning to end tyranny finally becomes a tyrannical order of rationalism. Its promise of harmony flounders and as a project it remains unfulfilling. The aristocrats of Plato's *Republic* are allowed to keep slaves. The impactful accomplishment of the work is Plato's notion of sharing combinative resources and demeaning property. Stephan Watt in his 1977 Wordsworth edition of the *Republic* also points out Plato's emphasis on "agent-centred morality (Plato, 1997, p. XI). It means that a person has to be of "certain sort" to establish a certain kind of utopia. Being and ideal are two versions of the same. The most dangerous aspect of the Republic is its thrust to silence all other narratives with the hegemonic Apollonian or rational narrative that lays foundation for the disciplining meta-narratives of the West.

Plato's *Republic* remained the vital inspiration of Thomas More's *Utopia* published in 1516. Written mainly to deal with the post-war situation of European countries troubled by scarcities and the crime committed by ex-soldiers and the serfs dismissed by landed Gentlemen. In two Books of the work, More narrates through his friend Hythloday the story of a utopian island that the narrator had visited. The island lived in "felicity" and "pleasure" which is "good" and "honest". Its relaxed life comes from the determination not to invade other nations and "exile" proprietorship. "There is nothing within the houses that is private" or "any man's own"

(More, 1947, p.8). Although these people "define virtue as a life ordered according to nature" yet in desiring and refusing things they are "ruled by nature" (*Ibid.*, p.111). There are 'diverse' kinds of religion in which they believe but they accept "the chiefest and the highest God" (*Ibid.*, p. 152). Most of them are the followers of the Christ. Those who commit crime are turned into "bondsmen" or slaves for life to serve the noble families. Despite breaking a new ground in suggesting that social and political problem can be solved through re-organizing, More's Utopia is still anchored to the Platonic discourse of master-slave relationship and rationalist hegemonics. More appreciates the diverse religious beliefs and nature worship of the island yet he privileges Christianity and makes it as a felicitating component of his Utopia. In other words the life of "pleasure" and "delectation" (*Ibid.*, p.113) is possible only through the master narrative of rationalism and Christianity.

Bacon's *New Atlantic* published in 1627 is another story of a visit to utopian island named Bensalem that has a dynamic scientific society called "Solomon's House" devoted to know the "secret motion of things". Thomas Case has rightly told us that Bacon wanted to reconcile science and religion and he was a "prophet and partly parent of modern science" (Bacon, 1960, p.xvii). He on the one hand wanted to show "particularities of physical causes" (*Ibid.*, p. xvi) on the other faith and inspiration as the sources of our knowledge of the supernatural of God and of the rational soul. The island of Bensalem combines this dynamic atomic physics and faith. It is founded by the Hebrew king Solomon. A priest of Bensalem receives the Book containing the Old and New Testaments through a miraculous pillar of light. The island has a trade but not for gold, silver or jewels only for God's first creature which was light (*Ibid.* p.278). The island is Christian. The Jewish merchant to whom the narrator talks believes that the island's laws were ordained by Moses through a secret cabala (*Ibid.*, p. 283). Bacon's ideal society that reconciles the atomistic and

Theo visions predominantly functions with the Christian paradigm connected to Platonic rationalism.

Marx's and Engles' *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that appeared in 1848 first in French is both a utopia and anti-utopia. It criticizes the "utopia" in which "class antagonism" disappears. The "fantastic attacks" in it "lose all practical value (Marx and Engles, 1977, p. 61). The authors of the Manifesto champion only the Proletarian "critical utopia" that can lead to "revolutionary" liberation. Obviously the Manifesto privileges only one kind of liberative discourse for the entire humankind and is connected to the rational Enlightenment project.

Recently, an American thinker George Gilder's work has acquired the status of a capitalist utopian work. Influenced by Adam Smith and Keynes he valorously projects competitive economy energized by men of faith taking risks. They are enlightened by the flashes of surprising knowledge. They accelerate growth while being centred in a higher consciousness of a "collective unconscious" or of a God (Gilder, 1982, p.263).

The brief discussion reveals that the utopia of the West is essentially an historical and fictive response to the problematic civilization of scarcity and conflict. It is shaped by the Platonic rationalism and Christian vision that silence all other discourse. It is peace project founded on the possible volcanic eruptions of the silenced.

II

The distinguishing feature of the ideal space envisioned and realized in *Guru Granth Sahib* is that it is not contrived or fictive. It is an imaginarily realized version of the real as it exists with countless possibilities only its socio-political part is to be organized. It is not a highly rational space of Platonic *eidos* it is rather the space of "excess" and beauty. Excess is a postmodern notion of a French thinker Georges Bataille. To him "Excess is not other than that whereby the being is firstly and above else conveyed beyond all circumscribing restriction"

(Tiffin Sand Lawson (ed.) 1994, p.33) Alan Stoekl in his Introduction to Bastille's essays entitled *Visions of Excess* relates it to a "ruptural opening" of an "unmaintainable and thus delusive unity whether the unity of consciousness the body a community or even a nation" (Bataille 1991, p.xxi). In other words all beings have repressed latent silenced or sleeping possibilities that are restless to break open the fashioned unity. To the Gurus and Bhagats of *Guru Granth Sahib* the entire universe or life-system abounds with unrepressed excess. Its multiple energy-flows which are not a response to the civilizational repression, scarcity or conflict evoke a sense of *vismad* or joyous wonder. Vismadic excess exceeds Bataille's excess that is backgrounded by the fascist kind of Foucauldian discipline and unity that Bataille is attacking. In *Rag Asa* Guru Nanak Dev celebrates this *vismad*:

Vismad sounds *Vismad* knowlege

Vismad beings *Vismad* differences

Vismad forms *Vismad* colours

Vismad union *Vismad* separation

Vismad deviance *Vismad* ways.

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 464)

The *vismadic* space of multiple sounds, knowledges, forms, colours and ways is different from the space of Shankara's one-folded Brahma or the "Verily One" Allah of the *Quran*. It is the Truth Realm or *Sach Khand* from where *Nirankar* (Formless) watches His own creation in the joy of His Kindness (*Ibid.*, p.8). The Formless although keeps everything with *Hukam* (commandment) yet not as the Oedipal or metadisciplinarian rather as the one who himself further blossoms in his carefreeness *vigsai veparvahu* (*ibid.*, p.8). The character of a space is determined by the one who presides over it. The Presiding Carefree here Himself is blossoming. In *Rag Vadhans* Guru Nanak Dev presents the Formless through an image of youth and power:

Yours eyes are pretty, teeth relishingly beautiful
Pretty nose long hair

Your movement magnificent words sweet.

(*Ibid.*, p. 567)

This space is unproblematic, here song and celebration inspired by the Formless prevail although only those sing who are blessed and accepted by *Nirankar*. In *Japuji* and *Rag Asa* Guru Nanak Dev says "Countless Diverse symphonies resound and there are countless musicians. Air sings You, water, fire sing You." (*Ibid.*, 6, p.347)

The space of song and festivity has been called *mahal* (palace) and *dargah* (sacred shrine). But to enter the *mahal* one has to lose ego (*haumai*) and be a bride (*suhagan*). Being bride means to be full of sacred desire with all one's senses intact. Entrance into this space is not through repression but through libidinal fullness. In *Rag Asa*, Guru Nanak says "only those brides enter the *mahal* who have lost their ego (*Ibid.*, p. 430). The bride/person, according to the Guru, has the wholly desire to love and enjoy the Divine Beloved. Those divided or schizophrenically split are not allowed to enter the *mahal* (*Ibid.*, p. 426). Bridal love with Gobind (God) creates *sahaj* or cosmic equilibrium in the person, the mind is purified and the light of the bride-devotee is absorbed in the light of the Beloved (*Ibid.*, p. 490).

It is not easy for the mind to lose itself and become bridal consciousness. The mind is a restless camel -*karhala* according to Guru Ram Das in *Rag Gauri*. It has to be absorbed in *Hari* under the guidance of a Guru who ornares with *Sabda* or the Divine Sound, both struck and unstuck, also called *anhad nad* (*Ibid.*, p.430)

Entrance into the *mahal* has also been called *sahurara ghar* or in laws' house because of the qualitative leap that the bride/person experiences by the transformation of consciousness and being. Here one recognizes the truth and enjoys the Beloved or *sahaj*.

Bhagat Kabir in *Rag Gauri* and Guru Arjun Dev in *Rag Suhi* call this space as "*Baikunth*" (*Ibid.*, pp.325.742). Both say that the space is visited by saints. It is a realm of peace

or *Sukh*. Here one tastes the Beloved *Hari* multiply. The words used are *bhog* and *bhunchavau*. The expressions suggest that the Beloved and the space where He prevails with His love are tasted even somewhat literally or materially. The experience is close to what Julia Kristeva calls *jouissance* in which the whole being including the body is involved. The space along with the Presence of the Beloved is not just an object of the *Upanishadic neti neti* but a very positive or yes-yes consciousness/experience. Through the sacred *jouissance* or *ras* the *Granth* bridges the gap between the ideal and the real. The *Granth's* ideal cum real space is not a utopian invention or fiction it is *kamarii* in *sahaj*. The word *Kamarii* of *Gurbani* is untranslatable into English. The ideal/real space of multiple possibility that may give *Sukh* or peace has been literally experienced by the Bhagats and the Gurus though their whole being with all their nerve centres fully engaged. What needs a special mention in view of the Brahmanical or alienated hermeneutic employed to explain *kamarii* (one's existential accomplishment) is that even in the metaphoric/semiotic expressions of the *Granth* the cosmically connected libidinal energy flows unchecked.

In *Rag Gauri Guareri*, Bhagat Ravidas calls this space *Begampura* which means "city of no" anxiety. The city according to him is free from pain and the system of taxation. There are no omissions, errors, pity or loss. It abounds with a feeling of well being. There is no hierarchical grading one can move freely. It is the city of "our Beloved" (*Ibid.*, p.343). The idea of the sacred city governed by "Our Beloved" with all these features is a map of civil organization as well. Both the Brahmanical and the modern capitalistic/socialistic spaces are graded. An advocate of capitalism George Gilder in his widely read book *Wealth and Poverty* asserts "the more successful a society is in achieving equal opportunity, or so-called meritocracy, the more separate tend to be its economic classes. Integration and equal opportunity are the inherently conflicting goals" (Gilder, 1982, p.90)

The goal of both the socialist and capitalistic utopias is increment of wealth by generating capital. Socialism aims at realizing the objective by banishing individual ownership and property, capitalism by encouraging competitive pursuit. But it is the notion of "secular" capital that motivates both the utopias. In the *Granth's* ideal realm also there is trade but mediated by the sacred. In *Rag Gauri Bairagan*, Guru Ram Das specifies this trade "We are the Traders of Ram (God) Hari makes us trade by giving the initial capital (*Guru Granth*, p.165). In *Rag Gauri Gurareri*, Guru Arjun Dev elaborates the sacred trade by saying "Capital becomes wholesome only in association with the True Guru Says 'Nanak one awakens to the love of the Transcendent'" (*Ibid.*, p.178). The suggestion here leads to a distinction between secular capital and sacred capital. The most vital question that arises here is whether capital can be sacred at all or is it a product of fierce cut throat competition and becomes ruthless? Its ruthless march then becomes what Lenin calls "monopoly capital" leading to Imperialism and High Capitalism. This question will remain unsettled, but the *Granth* hints at the possibility of evolving sacred capital. Trading with sacred capital means organizing the society in specific/non-capitalist/non-usurious relations. Capital is not just an asset or a thing. Marx himself says in chapter 48 (volume III) of his classic work *Das Capital*. "Capital is not a thing but rather a definite production relation belonging to definite historical formations of society. Capital is rather the means of production transformed into capital" (1977, p.814).

Is it possible for our civilizations to find an alternative non-usurious way of organizing the means of production and social relations? It is the most vital question of our times. Both Marcel Mauss in his influential work *The Gift* and his philosopher-sociologist follower Bataille in his essays have lamented over the production based linear progress of the West in contradistinction with the honour and passion based ways of their ancient ancestors in the Northern hemisphere.

In brief for peace and freedom from anxiety, *Guru Granth Sahib*, has pointed out the possibility of re-organizing the society of *Sukh* as an analogue/correlate of the *vismadic* universe. The universe of joyous wonder and beauty with ceaseless song and celebration. It will trade to generate capital that is sacred and belongs to "the Beloved". Obviously the proliferation of this capital will occur within the reality and consciousness of the sacred, beauty and love. To re-organize production relations, institutions and consciousness is a gigantic and almost impossible task but that will be the lasting promise of peace.

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***Guru Granth Sahib* : Messenger of Divine Humanism**

Gurbux Singh Shergill*

Increasing socio-political and economic interaction amongst various countries of the world has created the need for conflict resolution. Ever increasing dialogue between various cultural and religious identities has already created an awareness for the need of a composite, spiritual and scientific ideology which may provide the common ground for identities which may feel safe and play their role and come together with increasing sense of mutual trust and understanding. This evolution can only take place with a firm faith in Divine Humanism i.e. the concept of one God and His fatherhood. *Guru Granth Sahib* seems to be the only choice to become the focal point for this new global urge. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion and prime author of *Guru Granth Sahib*, acknowledged the contribution of all religions for the emancipation of mankind. He initiated an interfaith dialogue during his world wide travels for the essential unity of God and mankind. Just before starting his worldwide travels, he had a long dive into the holy Bein river and had a 'spiritual' encounter with the 'Prime Divine Soul'. After having the intimate spiritual dialogue, he emerged out with a 'Revealed Divine message' *ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ...* proclaiming *ਨਾ ਕੋਈ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ*. The whole *Guru Granth* is the Divine exposition of this '*Mool-Mantra*' (Holy concept) and His 'Divine Will' to unite the humanity by revealing the essential unity of God and all religions. Much needed religious co-existence, mutual

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respect and tolerance can be achieved only if there is an interfaith dialogue for the Holy search of a common spiritual creative 'Prime Soul'. *Guru Granth* is the only religious scripture which contains the holy *bani* of other religious saints and Sufi Fakirs who believed in 'Oneness of God' and its creation. It contains 4955 hymns of Guru Nanak Dev and his five successor Gurus. 778 hymns of Hindu Bhagats, two Muslim holy men, 121 hymns of Bhattas and 17 of other in Guru's court. Thus the *Granth Sahib* provides the true example of unity in diversity. Dr. Sarvapalli Radha Krishnan one of the greatest scholars and President of India says :

"We find in the *Adi Granth* a wide range of mystical emotions, intimate experiences of the personal realization of God and rapturous hymns of divine love in almost all languages of India including Sanskrit and Persian."

Guru Granth Sahib has many English translations and one in French along with a special selective publication by UNESCO. Dr. Arnold J. Toynbee, a celebrated historian of the modern age, writes :

"Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet, one thing can be foreseen, the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of human race. In this religious debate, the Sikh religion, and its scripture the *Adi Granth* will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world."

The main theme of the Gurus is to affirm the fatherhood of one God and brotherhood of all mankind-ਏਕੁ ਪਿਤਾ ਏਕਸ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਤੂ ਮੇਰਾ ਗੁਰ ਰਾਈ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 611). Bhagat Kabir also said almost the same thing, i.e.. All mankind is borne from one Divine source, ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥ ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕ ਮੰਦੇ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1349). According to *Gurmat*, there is essential unity of all religions although they seem to look

different and contradictory because of their different climatic, racial and linguistic origin. The main concern of *gurbani* is the alleviation of the suffering humanity through which so ever religions as the case may be Guru Amar Das the third Nanak says, "ਜਗਤੁ ਜਲੰਦਾ ਰਖਿ ਲੈ ਆਪਣੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰ ॥ ਜਿਤੁ ਦੁਆਰੈ ਉਬਰੈ ਤਿਤੈ ਲੈਹੁ ਉਬਾਰਿ ॥" - Oh God, save the burning world through anyway by bestowing your kindness. (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 853). It is in this spirit that the *Guru Granth* exhorts the followers of other religions to follow their religion in its true sense without wasting their time on meaningless rituals and dogmatic formulations. To the Mohammedans it says, that "Becoming a Muslim in the true sense is difficult unless one is kind hearted and washes away the dirt of his mind. One can call himself a Muslim only if he is the real one - i.e., ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਮੋਮ ਦਿਲਿ ਹੋਵੈ...ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਸੋਈ ਮਲੁ ਖੋਵੈ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1084). In the same way 'Brahmin' is also advised to call himself a 'Brahmin' only if he dwells on the thought of Prime creative soul- i.e. ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਜੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 662). To the Yogi he says, that only that one can call himself a Yogi who knows the real way of emancipation of mankind and uniting with God i.e., ਸੋ ਜੋਗੀ ਜੋ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਣੈ. (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 662). The Guru in the *Granth Sahib*, while addressing these 'Priests' as above, also exhorts them to shun from various malpractices which have crept in their life such as, falsehood, bribery and treacherous exploitation of human life. The erring 'Priesthood' is indicted i.e., ਕਾਦੀ ਕੂੜੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਮਲੁ ਖਾਇ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਜੀਆ ਘਾਇ ॥ ਜੋਗੀ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਅੰਧੁ ॥ ਤੀਨੇ ਓਜਾੜੇ ਕਾ ਬੰਧੁ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 662). This indictment of the priesthood by the Guru in the *Granth Sahib* calls for a serious attention of all religious leaders of today.

Most of the religions lay undue emphasis on the otherworldliness and exhort the people to abandon the working world to become ascetics or unwilling partners. The *Gurbani* in *Guru Granth Sahib* is life affirming and advocates

the spiritual emancipation right in this world, while carrying on the industrious activities of earning livelihood, enjoying good living as a fruit of the labour with a smile, devoting the mind to true Guru, and abandon all worries, - ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਭੇਟਿਐ ਪੂਰੀ ਹੋਵੈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ॥ ਹਸੰਦਿਆ ਪੈਨੰਦਿਆ ਖਾਵੰਦਿਆ ਵਿਚੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ॥ ---ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇਦਿਆ ਜੀਉ ਤੂੰ ਕਮਾਵਦਿਆ ਸੁਖ ਭੁੰਢੁ ॥ ਧਿਆਇਦਿਆ ਤੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਮਿਲੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਉਤਰੀ ਚਿੰਤ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 522). This universe being the creation of the Almighty '*Karta-purakh*', the prime creative power is considered His abode in the *Sri Guru Granth* and not a place for suffering penalty for being born : ਇਹ ਜਗੁ ਸਚੈ ਕੀ ਹੈ ਕੋਠੜੀ ਸਚੇ ਕਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਵਾਸ - (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 463). The God - '*Karta-purakh*' Himself is conceived to be part of his own creation. *Gurbani* in the *Granth Sahib* reminds the man about his being the most intelligent and powerful and an overlord of the earth where in all other forms of life are subservient to him. Again the *gurbani* reminds him that the human body bestowed on him is the most sought after, even the gods are longing to have this body. In view of his unique position in this universe the man is called upon to avail this opportunity to realize the God in him, i.e., achieving divine perfection and liberate himself from the lower instincts.

Every human being is ordained to live a family life and earn his livelihood with his own labour and sharing his earnings with other needy persons, Guru Nanak called upon all Yogis and saffron clad so called ascetics, to earn their livelihood and not to go begging for food and clothing. It is notable that Guru Nanak himself settled in Kartarpur after his missionary voyages and worked himself in his fields. Hence his injunction to every individual to earn his livelihood and share with others, i.e. ਗੁਰੂ ਪੀਰੁ ਸਦਾਏ ਮੰਗਣ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਮੂਲਿ ਨ ਲਗੀਐ ਪਾਇ ॥... ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੋਇ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p.,1245). It was in this context that Guru Nanak preferred to stay and eat with his poor host Bhai Lalo who earned his livelihood with his own labour, rejecting

the delicious feast offered by Malik Bhago, the chief of a large estate, whose earning was based on exploitation of poor labourers and peasants. Guru Nanak while refusing to join the feast of Malik Bhago explained that his delicious food smacked of the blood of the poor and simple food offered by Bhai Lalo was like sweet milk. This explains *gurbani's* proper emphasis on sharing. Of earnings from one's own hard labour with other needy persons and not wealth accumulated through exploitation of the poor masses. The Guru clearly differentiates between an industrious person who earns through his labour which may be physical, intellectual or organizational, giving every work partner his due and the other one who makes money through exploitation and illicit means. Such a person is termed as a "*Mayadhari*" a blind and deaf person who does not care for the divine word and accumulates wealth for wealth sake without any social or ethical relevance i.e. : ਮਾਇਆਧਾਰੀ ਅਤਿ ਅੰਨਾ ਬੋਲਾ ॥ ਸਬਦੁ ਨ ਸੁਣਈ ਬਹੁ ਰੋਲੁ ਘਚੋਲਾ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 313). *Gurbani* in *Sri Guru Granth* while preaching, sharing of wealth with the needy and poor, refrains the giving of alms with a sense of pride of being rich, when the rich giver insults the poor recipient. He is reprimanded in strongest words : ਗਰੀਬਾ ਉਪਰਿ ਜਿ ਖਿਜੈ ਦਾੜੀ ॥ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮਿ ਸਾ ਅਗਨਿ ਮਹਿ ਸਾੜੀ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 92)

Exploitation in any form is condemned by the Guru as worst sin -ਹਕ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸ ਸੁਅਰ ਉਸ ਗਾਇ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 313). According to *Gurbani*, the real cause of the difference and strife between the rich and the poor, low and high is socio-economic and religious exploitation. The Guru stands for common wealth of equals where in nobody is low or high : ਸਭੇ ਸਾਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 97). Bhagat Ravidas, whose divine poetry is part of *Guru Granth Sahib*, visualized himself as a citizen of such an ideal city state where there was no discrimination, no pain or worry and every body is alike and friendly under the sovereignty of God : ਬੇਗਮ ਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ॥

ਦੁਖ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥...ਖਉਫੁ ਨ ਖਤਾ ਨ ਤਰਸੁ ਜਵਾਲੁ ॥ ਅਬ ਮੋਹਿ
ਖੂਬ ਵਤਨ ਗਹ ਪਾਈ ॥ ਉਹਾ ਖੈਰਿ ਸਦਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*,
p. 345). This vision of a Holy Commonwealth of equals, where there is no exploitation, discrimination, misery or social pain, is only possible, where according to Guru every body earns his livelihood through him or her honest labour and ready to share with his fellow beings without a feeling of pride or false superiority, devoting his thoughts for the praise of the *Karta-purakh*, the divine creative 'Prime Soul'. In this way *Guru Granth Sahib* expounds a divine formula of honest labour, sharing the wealth with fellow beings and contemplating on 'Holy Name' of the True one-the divine creator Prime soul. To put it in a simple language, this divine formula of successful holy life is '*kirt karna*', '*vand chhakna*', and '*Nam japna*' (ਕਿਰਤ ਕਰਨਾ, ਨਾਮ ਜਪਨਾ, ਵੰਡ ਛਕਣਾ). The keynote of *gurbani* teachings in *Guru Granth Sahib* is meditation on the 'Holy Name' with total submission to the Divine Will the '*Hukam*'. The basic principle of '*Nam Japna*' is best explained through Guru Amar Das's famous hymn : ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਗਾਵੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੂਝੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 753), along with his another famous couplet ; ਏ ਮਨ ਜੈਸਾ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਤੈਸਾ ਹੋਵਹਿ ਤੇਹੇ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਇ ॥ ਆਪਿ ਬੀਜਿ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਖਾਵਣਾ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p.755). As such '*Nam Japna*' is the basic principle of Sikh way of life. It is not a one time or five time recitation. it is a process as part of daily living of a Gurmukh - i.e. '*swas swas japna*' - remembering the Prime Holy Spirit with each breath. No doubt it precedes with regular recitation and Jap ultimately becoming a part of thought process - *Ajapa Jap* (ਅਜਪਾ ਜਾਪ) one may be doing any thing, his mind will automatically remains tuned up with the 'Prime Soul'. This is the stage when the mind acquires super divine energy and becomes most creative. The main problem at this stage is to acquire equipoise (*sahaj*) and avoid lapsing back. This is possible only when one rises above three proverbial stages i.e.,

rajo, tamo, sato and acquires the fourth stage of '*sahaj*' Third Nanak, Guru Amardas says 'Oh mind rise above the three to the fourth stage of '*sahaj*' so that the Divine creative power remains in your heart and you may keep immersed in singing 'His' praise : ਮਨ ਰੇ ਤੂੰ ਗੁਣ ਛੋਡਿ ਚਉਥੈ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇ॥ ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਤੇਰੈ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਭਾਈ ਸਦਾ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 603). - ਸਰਜ ਅਨਦ ਅਨਹਦ ਧੁਨਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਬਹੁਰਿ ਨ ਭਏ ਬਿਖਾਦ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1224). This stage of spiritual equipoise is the result of constantly dominant divine thought which erases the impact of previous ill thoughts and bad actions. The impact of the uninterrupted dominant divine thought is so much that it washes away the DNA effect and creates a new awareness, making the man real master of his body and mind.

Human body has evolved over millions of years to its present stage with its physical parts to almost to their perfection. Human mind is now the Prime force in further evolution and revolution of his own self and human environments. The principle of the survival of the fittest is now predominantly in favour of human mind to play the prime role in its own evolution to bring revolution in human environments. So it is the divine evolution of mind which is the most important agenda before the human beings now. An individual being is concerned with his own evolution i.e., betterment, right here in this life and that so, immediately. Mental peace and poise is his daily need. *Nam-Simran* the meditation on divine Name is the only way. Sri Guru Ramdass shows the way: ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਾਂਤ ਹੈ ਮਨਿ ਤਨਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਸਮਾਇ॥ ਨਾਮੋ ਚਿਤਵੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਪੜੈ ਨਾਮਿ ਰਹੈ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਗਈ ਬਿਲਾਇ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 653). It took millions of years to evolve from ape to man but the Guru turns the men into gods without any delay. Guru Nanak says : ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਗੁਰ ਆਪਣੇ ਦਿਉਹਾੜੀ ਸਦ ਵਾਰ॥ ਜਿਨਿ ਮਾਣਸ ਤੇ ਦੇਵਤੇ ਕੀਏ ਕਰਤ ਨ ਲਾਗੀ ਵਾਰ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 462).

***Guru Granth Sahib* and Culture of Peace**

Rajinder Kaur Rohi*

Peace is an undisturbed and an unshattered situation of human mind, relations and the phenomena around. It creates and maintains the originality of ideas, situations and relations. Anything from outside, unreal or disturbing is opposed to peace. In the absence of peace the whole life comes in the unholy grip of chaos. Only bigger revolutions can change the course of that chaos. But those revolutions take place very rarely in the history of mankind. Such a bigger revolution took place with the coming of Guru Nanak. It was a revolution of its own kind. He himself lived in peace with the Reality and put the whole world on that track. The linguistic expression of his living in peace with God is known as *Gurbani*. His *Bani* is the patriarchal source for the whole of ideology known as Sikhism. It was a revolution of peace, for peace and by the harbinger of peace. He gave many points of programme for peace. For example :

- (i) Peace with the idea of the Divine.
- (ii) Peace within the self.
- (iii) Peace with the self and the Supreme Self.
- (iv) Peace within society.
- (v) Peace with other religious traditions.
- (vi) Peace with humanity.

Against the polytheistic and monistic ideas about the Divine the Guru defined Reality in the sense of a single absolute personality i.e. Akal with whom an undisturbed love and peaceful relationship could be maintained. The start of the Sikh Scripture with numerical one is the symbol of faith in the

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Oneness. The whole of *Guru Granth Sahib* is further interpretation and proof of faith and establishment of undisturbed love relationship with that only One. The idea of oneness or the singleness of the Reality is knitted so well in *Guru Granth Sahib* that nothing remains as a doubt. The purpose of religion for the Guru was to create undisturbed love relationship of man and God. For this he tried to prepare human self which was to be streamlined for walking on the path of single minded and unshattered devotion. This was to be attained while having utter peace first from within. In the whole of *Guru Granth Sahib* the passage to God starts from within the self which is already in peace and is living peacefully in the eternal Will. The individual self which is not in peace with itself does not qualify to tread on the true path of God. To prepare an individual to tread on the divine path successfully the Guru gave ethical philosophy which is engrained in *Guru Granth Sahib*. After the Tenth Guru, *Guru Granth* was bestowed with *Gurgaddi*. Since then *Guru Granth* is the guiding source for the seekers of the divine path. *Guru Granth Sahib* throws great light upon the relationship of individual self and the Divine Self. *Guru Granth Sahib* shows the path for the establishment of personal relationship with the Divine. The separated self according to the Guru always craves to meet its original source. The Guru connects the individual self with the Supreme Self by way of connecting it through the *Shabad* and the consciousness about the single minded love or God. *Guru Granth* is not merely the source for spiritual guidance it is also the great source for ethical guidance. According to the Guru's path no one can successfully walk on the true path of spirituality unless and until he himself is true. A person with immoral behaviour cannot even think of entering into Guru's path. *Guru Granth Sahib* being the collection of great Gurus, saints and Bhagats provides every kind of knowledge for ethical behaviour. Its providence helps to create peaceful society of spiritually guided ethical persons.

Historically also the formation of the Sikh Scripture in

the form of the *Granth* and then as the *Guru Granth* was completed with the collection of the *Bani* of many pious people from various religious denominations. The criteria of collection for the *Granth* was the same as had been with the *Guru* i.e. the linguistic expression for peaceful or undisturbed love relationship with the Divine Beloved. Sikh religion as a system of thought is unique in the history of the religious thought of mankind. It started with the pronouncement that there is no Hindu-no Musalman. Perhaps it did not mean that there is neither any truly Hindu religious person nor any Muslim one but only the Sikh. Rather it might have meant that the difference of being a Muslim or a Hindu has no meaning at all as far as the matter of being truly religious is concerned. To be religious for the *Guru* was to have truthful and unshattered love relationship with the Divine. *Guru Nanak* never forced any one to enter into his fold as his follower rather he tried to acquaint and attach them with the truth of their religion in original undisturbed form.

In *Guru Granth Sahib* we come across many such examples. In this respect the interfaith dialogue initiated by the *Guru* forms the prominent part for the ideology of *Guru Granth Sahib*. What exactly is unique in *Guru Granth Sahib* is that people of all religions are convinced to shed everything which does not include in becoming truly religious i.e. to have peaceful love and obedient relationship of man with God. Because anything other than love mars the peace of the self and it's relationship with God. *Guru Granth* helps to maintain the undisturbed flow of love-relationship and peaceful obedience with God. The whole of *Guru Granth* is the expression of peaceful co-habitation in the Reality which is universal and has equal relation with all. Thus *Guru Nanak's* system which is now the system of *Guru Granth* was started as exposition of the universal truth to mankind in general. It is certainly the totality of religious truth. This system of thought did not start in opposition to a particular religion nor did it start as the stream flowing from in between any two

religious traditions of divergent nature and origin. It is rather the independent thought system providing general surface to meet the truth. Yet the peaceful co-existential relationship with all the religious systems and the communities is very well maintained. This is the truth given to the religious persons of the world as a whole.

Throughout the history of religious phenomena generally to enter into a particular religious system needs a particular type of initiation. Any one wanting to be a member of a particular religion has to go through a particular form of initiation. One is oftenly made the member of a particular religious group first and then given the knowledge to enter into relationship with the divine. Here the case is different. Guru Nanak acquainted the initiator with the Divine Truth and connected his relationship with the Divine first only then he guided him to behave well in that society in which he was living rather than coming to Guru's specific fold, community or Guru's way of life. The Guru visited almost all the known centres of Indian Sub-continent at that time. He acquainted people with the true nature of the Divine. Whosoever from wherever liked to join his system he let him join. But this joining never required any type of physical form of initiation or opposition to a particular community. Yet the mental as well as the spiritual initiation was a must and opposition to the forces of love and peace of course was taught. So is the relationship of *Guru Granth* to the world of today. Anyone from anywhere in the world can take guidance from *Guru Granth Sahib* and become a learner.

In the religious history it is very often perceived that a particular religious system starts within a particular environment in opposition to a particular situation. The history of Judaism and Islam are replete with this type of phenomena. It may be with the divine call or the divine guidance but the central theme remains antagonism to people having religion other than their own. But Sikhism has not come into being for any type of antagonism. It neither took birth to wash out the

already existing systems of religious life nor to establish it on the grounds prepared for other's destruction. The purpose of the Gurus in *Granth Sahib* is not merely to maintain peace with other religions for the co-existence yet it is also for the search and the love of truth which the Gurus thought was the basic and absolute concern for peace of each religion and society. The Gurus seem to have done more for the establishment of undisturbed love relationship of man and God as well as man and man at the universal level rather than for the establishment of a regional religion of their own. It was like cleaning the silt from the universal truth of religiosity which though existed in its very nature but somehow lost its sheen due to the unnecessary rituals and outward symbolism. They cleaned the passage which had been disturbed by unnecessary inroads made by the self styled priestly class.

World Peace and Role of Women in the Context of Sikhism: Sociological Perspective

Balwinder Kumari Arora*

No doubt modern life is becoming more and more differentiated, segmented and alienated. But at the same time, human society has never been unstratified. Unequal distribution of power has always created imbalance leading to variety of conflicts, the indications of which are available in Gurbani also. The shabads such as :

ਜਗਤੁ ਜਲੰਦਾ ਰਖਿ ਲੈ.....¹

ਉਚੇ ਚੜ੍ਹਿ ਕੈ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਘਰਿ ਘਰਿ ਏਹਾ ਅਗਿ॥²

ਕਲਿ ਕਲੇਸ ਤਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਮਿਟਾਵਉ॥³

etc. narrate the internal conflict of human beings but there are other *sabads* which reveal the external armed conflicts also :

ਬਾਬਰਵਾਣੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਈ ਕੁਇਰੁ ਨ ਰੋਟੀ ਖਾਇ॥⁴

ਪਾਪ ਕੀ ਜੰਵ ਲੈ ਕਾਬਲਹੁ ਧਾਇਆ ਜੋਰੀ ਮੰਗੈ ਦਾਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੋ॥⁵

ਏਤੀ ਮਾਰ ਪਈ ਕਰਲਾਣੇ ਤੈਂ ਕੀ ਦਰਦੁ ਨ ਆਇਆ॥⁶

All these reveal the continuous restlessness, agonies of mind and physical atrocities as a result of violence emerging from variety of sources but the basic one is hunger for power, may be economic, social or political. As Gurus have emphasized that

ਇਸੁ ਜਰ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਘਣੀ ਵਿਗੁਤੀ ਇਨਿ ਜਰ ਘਣੀ ਖੁਆਈ॥⁷

ਜਿਸੁ ਹਥਿ ਜੋਰੁ ਕਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਸੋਇ॥⁸

People go after power, grab it and try to exploit others on the basis of might.

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Human society around the world, largely being patriarchal, the women continue to be the worst victims of armed conflict and the greatest stakeholders of promoting peace. Violations against women take on different dimensions. As a result of direct violence, they lose their near and dears, become subject to sexual terrorism, lose property, livelihood etc. Strongly established gender biases in society compel them to lead miserable life. In today's conflicts 85% of the victims are civilians of which a majority are women. Violence against them is used as deliberate military tactics. Not only during or after armed conflict women suffer, but they are the victims of domestic violence also. In World War II, in Nazi death Camps and in Japan's Chemical warfare laboratories, where prisoners were used as guinea pigs, at least the perpetrators of the atrocities could be identified as uniformed military personnel, trained to kill. But today those who are burning the brides or driving the women to suicide by indulging violence against them wear no uniforms. They cannot be distinguished from other members of the community. After killing, they continue their normal lives, attending religious festivals, gathering or temple/Gurudwara services or social events like wedding etc. as if nothing had happened. Statistics produced by Human Rights Watch and Associated press shows that only in India every year 25,000 brides are killed or maimed at the altar of dowry issue. Thus women suffer and lead a deprived life at every step due to their subordinate position granted by the society.

Sikh society is supposed to be egalitarian one as far as the ideal typical stand of Sikhism. Tenets of Sikhism focus on the desirability of peace as well as the path to peace :

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨਾ॥⁹

what to talk of violence rather the stress is on :

ਹਿਆਉ ਨ ਕੈਗੀ ਠਾਹਿ.....¹⁰

Thus Sikhism is against any kind of divide and guide the humanity towards sustainable peace. As regards women, Great

Gurus have felt strongly concerned for the then existing inequalities against women. So they have given sufficient space in Holy Granth to provide due status to women. Some quotations like :

ਏਕ ਜੋਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਮੂਰਤੀ.....¹¹

ਸਭ ਪਰਵਾਰੈ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਰੋਸਟ ॥¹²

...ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨੁ ॥¹³

ਪੁਰਖ ਮਹਿ ਨਾਰਿ ਨਾਰਿ ਮਹਿ ਪੁਰਖਾ.....¹⁴

But at the practical level Sikh community is no exception to the kind of hostile attitude meted to the women all-round the world. Punjab terrorism speaks volumes of such stories where the women have been subjected to trauma.

Conflicts cannot be ended simply by declaring peace, fundamental social changes are necessary to prevent hostilities where the role of women can be unique one. But largely, women are not associated at any level of high-level bodies, making efforts for peace. Informal peace initiatives of women's groups in some countries like Congo, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and even Afghanistan have made critical differences in promoting peace. Within India also women are playing a significant role in promoting peace in conflict-ridden areas of Kashmir and the northeast. Women's group, be it the Naga Mothers Association or the Kuki Women's Association or Meira Pabis of Manipur, show the courage to take the initiatives to build a sustainable peace at their lands.

Sustainable peace is not just the absence of war. There could be no peace even when there is no violence. Killing of some one does not always require a bullet, it can be by depriving him / her of basic amenities.

ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੂਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥

ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਹਾਮਾ ਤਾ ਭਰੇ ਜਾ ਮੁਰਦਾਰ ਨ ਖਾਇ ॥¹⁵

The greater the gap between actual and the potential, the greater the invisible violence. Sustainable peace is dynamic, indivisible as well as holistic. In this context, the old structures

need some amendments. Surprisingly, the Sikh community has not so far shown effort for initiative of inclusion of women at higher bodies which can be said 'landmark' to get the advantage of the potential of the women for peace building in society.

International organizations are slowly recognizing the indispensable role that women can play in conflict resolution and sustaining peace. At the first U N Conference on women, held in Mexico City in 1975, the three inter-linked goals of equality, development and peace were established. These goals were reaffirmed at the subsequent World Conference held in Coopenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995).

Following the Beijing Platform for action, the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender perspective in Multidimensional Peace Supports operations (May 2000) outlined some practical ways in which the United Nations System and member States could promote women's active involvement in peace missions. As a result, the 23rd Special session of the General Assembly not only accepted but reaffirmed also the links between peace, disarmament and gender inequality. Another landmark towards this direction is that the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which insists on the full inclusion of women in peace processes and emphasizes the need for gender perspective in all related initiatives at all levels.

The mandate of this resolution has been welcomed by many organizations in Europe. It has been accepted now that women and girls suffer the most from any kind of conflict and hence there is need for stronger measures to integrate women at all steps of peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building, including humanitarian operations, reconstruction, rehabilitation, disarmament and reintegration programs. Looking at the efforts being made for world peace around the world, it seems mendatory for Sikh Society also to think

broadly and look beyond their narrow interests. This is high time to spread the message of equality and peace given in *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*.

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਦੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ ॥¹⁶

All are the creation of Akal Purakh and all should be given their dues. Following this, there remains no logic for the exclusion of women away from any power house. Their role can be substantially significant for world peace.

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***Guru Granth Sahib* and Right of Progeny to Inherit World Peace**

Raghubir Singh Bains*

Man is born free. All humans are born equal in dignity and have equal rights. It is right of entire human race to enjoy liberty, equality and fraternity without distinction of caste, colour, creed, race, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Almost all human beings throughout the world seem to have been guaranteed right to freedom of thought, opinion, expression, conscience and religion. United Nations also believe that no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs. No one will be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Children are guaranteed special treatment. International communities give assurance that progenies will be protected from violence and wars. New generations will live in peace and they will have a right to violence free environment and future oriented education. This is a good gesture for entire human race.

In spite of all the rights and freedoms which international communities boast to guarantee, humans are seen in shackles of slavery, violence and under severe threat of oppression. Powerful and wealthiest nations are plagued by materialism. Environmentalists complain that this planet has been raped by the rich nations. Under the influence of materialistic and

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excessive craving for luxuries, the rich nations are dealing with Third world countries with stiff necks. Our children are vulnerable. Although they are our future but they are suffering the most at the hands of oppressive nations.

Under the present conditions, many of the children will not get opportunity to bloom in their life because they become easy prey to violence, discrimination and life threatening onslaught of underworld dons, mafia groups and warlords.

The present world is suffering from maladies of violent conflict, war and bloodshed. People are victim of physical, mental, social, moral, political, financial and state violence. World badly needs peace and harmony.

Global efforts have been made during the second half of the 20th century to promote peace within and among nations and to secure human rights for all people over this planet. Many peace agreements were signed by different nations during the last five decades but despite these significant accomplishments, the international community has yet to secure a truly sustainable peace across the globe where billions of people do not have an equal claim to basic human rights. Big nations that talk of universal peace and prosperity are the biggest sellers of arms in the world and thus creating threat to the global power balance. Everybody, especially our children need protection from the fear of power imbalance so that it does not result in violence and world war.

World Peace is attainable to a greater extent but the world has to learn to adhere to the religious and spiritual values as taught by the Sikh Gurus who were apostles of universal peace.

Philosophy and concepts of Sikhism enrich human life and world civilization. Sikh Scripture teach compassion and forgiveness. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* enshrines the revealed Word of God. The revealed Word is not exclusively for the Sikhs but it is for entire human race. The message respects entire human race, its dignity and honour, It stands for universal brotherhood, harmonious living, universal peace,

prosperity and *Sarbat Da Bhala*. It stands for well-being of the human family and peace on earth. *Guru Granth Sahib* enshrines universal message of One God and brotherhood of human race. It does not teach violence, suppression and oppression (Neither to frighten others nor to be frightened by anybody). It has a fair and objective attitude towards opinions and practices that differ from it. It condemns evil action whether it is Babur or anyone else. In today's world, philosophy of *Guru Granth Sahib* is the only resolution to build a better world, free of nuclear danger, the arms race, poverty, ignorance, discrimination, persecution and suffering, ensuring development, dignity and justice for all. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is panacea for all the worldly maladies.

By living in consonance with the Sikh philosophy, together we can change the culture of war and violence into a culture of peace and non-violence for our progeny. Let us pray and practice the concept of world peace. Let us commit to practice the essence of *Guru Granth Sahib* and guarantee human values especially to our younger and future generation. This act will inspire them to aspire for a world of dignity and harmony, a world of peace, justice, solidarity, liberty, equality and prosperity.

By following the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib*, we can restore the right of the "Culture of Peace" to our progeny. Similar philosophy has also been defined by United Nations with the set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.

Conflict and Peace Making

Rajinder Kaur*

Jab Lag Duniya Rahiae Nanak Kuch Suniae Kuch Kahiae.

A totally harmonious society without conflicts is a myth. It is but natural that everyone desires to have peace, the accomplishment of life lies in the attainment of peace. In this respect two questions seem to be important :

-In spite of the desire to attain peace, everyone achieves it.

-Those who ascertain that they have attained peace, do they attain it in toto.

To attain peace in toto is a myth. It is only the quantum of peace that can be increased. The struggle for peace is a continuous process. Human history is a record of conflicts. Conflicts at the micro-level as well as the macro-level. Conflicts basically refer to a perceived incompatibility of actions or goals. A relationship or an organisation without conflict is probably apathetic. Conflict signifies involvement, commitment and caring. If understood, if recognised, conflicts can stimulate renewed and improved human relations. Without conflict people seldom face and resolve their problems.

Social psychological studies have identified several ingredients, which are common at all levels of social conflicts, whether inter personal, intergroup, or international. Whenever two people, two groups, or two nations interact, their perceived needs and goals may conflict. Many social problems arise as people pursue individual self interest, to their collective detriment. In real life we can avoid such traps

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by establishing rules that regulate self-serving behaviour, by keeping social groups small so that people feel responsibility for one another, by enabling communication, thus reducing mistrust, by making co-operation more rewarding and by invoking altruistic norms.

When people compete for scarce resources, human relations often sink into prejudice and hostility. Conflicts also arise when people feel unjustly treated, and when people are surrounded by misperceptions of the adversary's motive and goals.

Although toxic forces can breed destructive conflict, we can harness other forces to bring conflict to a constructive resolution. Although conflicts are readily kindled and fueled by social dilemmas, competition, perceived injustices and misperceptions, some equally powerful forces can transform hostility into peace and harmony.

Peace in its most positive sense is more than the suppression of open conflict, more than a tense, fragile, surface calmness. Peace is the outcome of creativity managed conflict, one in which the parties reconcile the perceived differences and reach genuine accord. Social Psychologists have focused on the four Cs of peacemaking : Contact, Co-operation, Communication and Conciliation.

Putting people into close contact can reduce their hostilities. Desegregation in the society helps to improve attitudes. Desegregation can be attained through industrialization of society. Desegregation of schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces have produced significant social results to some extent. However competitive contacts can divide people whereas co-operative contact can unite people. Contacts are generally beneficial when people work together to overcome a common threat or to achieve super ordinate goal opportunities for co-operative learning/or team work definitely promote harmony than competitive classroom/or work situations.

Communication between conflicting parties through meditation helps to remove misperceptions and increase

mutual understanding and trust. At times when tensions increase to such an extent that genuine communication is impossible, in such cases small conciliatory gestures by one party may elicit reciprocal conciliatory acts by the other party. One such conciliatory, GRIT (graduated and reciprocated initiates in tension reduction) aims to alleviate international situations.

The teachings of the Sikh Gurus right from Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji emphasized on the brotherhood of mankind. According to them all men are equal irrespective of caste, class, race or sex. The very emergence of Sikhism is a symbol of brotherhood among mankind. Throughout their lives they fought against the conflicts between the Muslims and the Hindus and emphasized on the co-existence of all the communities, "*Awal, Allah, Noor Upaiah Kudrat de Sab Bande, EK Noor te Sab Jag Upjia Kaun Bhale Kaun Mande*".

In the light of the teachings of our Gurus the goal of mankind should be to find strategies to resolve their conflicts by regulating their behaviour through Contacts, Cooperation, Communication and Conciliation and promote maximum peace and harmony.

World Peace and The United Nations Organisation : Contemporary Challenges

Sukhdev Singh Sohal*

Contemporary world is encountering innumerable challenges such as droughts, famines, disease and foremost war. In about one hundred or more 'small wars' more people have died than were killed during the World War II.¹ Famine, hunger and disease haunt major parts of Africa and Asia with disastrous consequences on rest of the globe. The probability of world peace becoming a first casualty is difficult to rule out. The task of the United Nations Organisation appears to be becoming more relevant than it was earlier. The present paper attempts to delineate contemporary challenges to the United Nations Organisation in the context of world peace.

Genesis of the formation of the United Nations Organisation is rooted in the failure of its predecessor the League of Nations.² The World War I (1914-1918) and the World War II (1939-1945) caused human catastrophe of great dimension surpassing all forms of medieval barbarities.³ Henceforth, the fear of any repeat in the future had frightened the world statesmen. The term 'United Nations' was coined by the U.S. President F.D. Roosevelt and first used in the Declaration of the United Nations on January 1, 1942 when the representatives of 26 nations pledged the governments to continue fighting together against the Axis powers.⁴ In the Moscow Declaration of October 1943 it was decided 'to create a new improved international peacekeeping organisations after the War.'⁵ However, the San Francisco Conference (15

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April-26 June 1945) attended by fifty representatives determined the aims and structure of the UNO; it drafted the UN Charter which was signed on 26 June 1945 and ratified at the first session of the UN General Assembly on 24th October 1945.⁶ The UN Charter in 111 articles sets out the aims of the United Nations as thus:

to save humanity from the scourge of war;
to protect human rights and the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small;
to promote justice and respect for international law;
and to promote social progress, better standards of life and freedom.⁷

Sir Clement Attlee, the British Premier defined its ultimate aim in 1946 'as the creation of a world of security and freedom, a world governed by justice and moral law'.⁸ Broadly speaking; its aim is to promote international peace, security and cooperation. Its membership has reached up to 191 by the end of 2002.

II

Broadly speaking, the United Nations is facing three challenges: increasing global inequalities and tensions; its institutional drawbacks in the wake of American unilateralism and militarisation of nations and contending groups. The task to ensure world peace is appearing Himalyan one day by day.

Aims and objectives of the United Nations appear unrealistic in the face of mounting global inequalities increasing sharply during the phase of rapid globalisation. The gap in per capita income between with the richest fifth of the world's people and those with the poorest fifth increased from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 74 to 1 in 1995.⁹ The tensions and insecurities brought about by these widening inequalities cause people to seek refuge in particularities: political separation, regionalist demands and revanchist cultural movements.¹⁰ James Gustave Speth, administrator of the UNDP warns the West against the ill-effects of contradictory developments on developing countries. The world has

become "more polarised both between and within the countries. The risk of a huge global underclass undermining international stability is quite real. The World Bank has estimated that in the past 15 years, the per capita income has declined in more than 100 countries."¹¹ Brutal disparities exist between countries and societies. The distance between the richest and the poorest countries was 11 to 1 in 1913, 35 to 1 in 1950, 72 to 1 in 1992 and 727 to 1 in 1997. Almost half of the world's population (3 billion) subsist on \$ 2 or less a day.¹²

The crisis of poverty in Africa became worse due to civil war and by a rapidly growing population resulting in one of the greatest human disasters in history. By 1984, about 35 million people died from hunger especially in Africa. In 1985 and 1986, despite humanitarian aid from the United Nations and from individual countries and relief organizations, over one million people died of starvation.¹³

Although the United Nations has failed to live up to the hopes of its founders,¹⁴ it continues to function as the world's longest lived international assembly of nations. The most important function of the Security Council is "the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security". The Security Council is so organised as to give almost a monopoly of authority to its permanent members. This absolute veto instead of bolstering the peace of the world, crippled the Council and rendered it helpless in the face of emergencies.¹⁵ With the closure of the Cold War and onset of Pax Americana, the aims and objectives of the United Nations seem to be getting refracted for partisan purposes. U.S. imperialism appears blatant because it is linked directly with war and points to an endless series of wars in the future.¹⁶ B.B. Ghali, a former Secretary General of the United Nations has rightly expressed his fears that "unilateralism may destroy the United Nations".¹⁷ Moreover, Anglo-American unilateralism has caused severe division within the European Union. It has done a huge disservice to the United Nations.¹⁸

An impassioned debate has begun over the role of the Security Council and the future of the UN sparked off by the war on Iraq unleashed by the Anglo-American alliance. Doomsday prophets aver that the UN may go the way of the League of Nations. Earlier Soviet Union also sidelined the UN in the case of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afganistan. The NATO bombed former Yugoslavia ignoring the UNO. So did Israil and apartheid South Africa. But the rationalisation the U.S. has applied in the case of war on Iraq seems to defy logic.¹⁹ The notion of 'pre-emptive strike' which the US President George Bush has recently justified appears to have medieval moorings. The Charter of the United Nations, however, categorically condemns any kind of use of force against another member or non-member of the UN. Since the Security Council has not authorised military intervention by the USA, the action taken by the USA against Iraq is illegal and an act of aggression or crime against peace under international law.²⁰

The United Nations became a battleground of the Cold War where rival powers presented ambitious schemes for general and complete disarmament for propaganda purposes. However, by the mid fifties, the focus shifted from disarmament to arms control.²¹ A total of 3,262 resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly until September 1997, about 431 of them are related to nuclear disarmament. The coercive and comprehensive disarmament of Iraq is unique in the history of disarmament because the UN Security Council mandated it. Resolution 686 of April 1991 established terms of cease-fire after the Gulf War of 1991. It created the United Nations Special Commission to ensure verified elimination of Iraq's biological and chemical weapons as well as of ballistic missiles capable of travelling more than 150 kilometers. By May 1998, some members of the Security Council wanted Iraq to be declared disarmed. However, the Security Council Resolution 1284 of December 17, 1999 established the UN Monitoring Verification and Inspection Commission under

Hans Blix. The US President Bill Clinton had already declared in November 1999 that "sanctions will be there until the end of time or as long Saddam lasts"²² With a view to wage war against Iraq, the US Administration provided "graphic details", complete with satellite images of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in February 2002. But after the War nothing has been recovered despite deploying 1000 experts who specialise in weapons. In fact, the UN has been efficiently dodged.²³ The U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld articulated the justification for the invasion of Iraq stating that "the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence of weapons of mass destruction".²⁴ In fact, Washington scarcely concealed its real agenda of 'regime change'. The UN inspection process was just a diplomatic weapon of mass deception.²⁵ The UN's association with the US 'sanctions policy in Iraq has recently led to bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad on August 19, 2003 killing its Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello along with 17 others. The UN has withdrawn from Iraq.²⁶

The United Nations Organisation does not have independent source of income. The U.N. Charter approves peacekeeping operations. A total of 49 operations have been established since its inception. In 1994, there were 73,393 military personnel. The number has come down to 14,500 in 1998. About 2000 UN Peacekeepers have lost their lives during 1945-2003. At present, there are 17 peacekeeping operations: six in Europe, four in the Middle East, four in Africa, two in Asia and one in Americas. The UN peacekeeping budget has steadily declined from US \$ 3.19 billion in 1994 to US \$ 907 million in 1998. The shrinking resources effect the level of UN peacekeeping activities.²⁷ The major economic powers have succeeded in eroding the role and functions of the UN mainly by keeping it on the brink of financial bankruptcy by illegally withholding the payments.²⁸ In 1986, about 98% of its members owed money. Even the US defaulted for more than \$ 100 million. The US wants power

in proportion to funds. The United Nations had by the nature of its constitution, no power or resources independent of those assigned to it by member-nations and hence no power of independent action²⁹.

The United Nations Organisation is as vital to the world now as it was in 1945. The role of the UN for ensuring world peace has been acknowledged world wide. The UN as such and its affiliates have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prizes for six times.³⁰ Meanwhile, the UN remains engaged on a wide range of fronts around the World, from reducing poverty and promoting universal literacy to protecting the environment, combating disease and undertaking a permanent peace operations.³¹ Its basic message is that we all live in one world and must learn to share it or perish. With all its faults, the United Nations is one organization that tries to bring the world's people together peacefully by making a vital attempt to prevent war, ensure human rights to all and promote social progress.

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World Peace : Challenges and Remedies

Himmat Singh Gill*

(Abstract)

1. Thrust Areas

Is world peace a reality and a possibility in the present times of a nuclear-infested environment globally has it become just a talking point at world conventions on peace and at the United Nations.

2. Challenges

- * The breakup of the Soviet Union power block and the rule of one super-power.
- * Economic Disparity between Classes and Nations.
- * The North-South divide.
- * Religious Intolerance and the spread of Fundamentalism in Asia, the Middle East and Europe.
- * The emerging cult of coups and with it the spread of military rule in smaller and poorer Nations.
- * Money power and one super-power getting near exclusive control over the UN and other democratic setups.
- * The weakening of legislative and judicial institutions and failing to control wayward state power.
- * The marginalized groups are unable to restructure their societies, and feel frustrated with their minimal role.
- * The greed for grabbing natural resources like oil and natural gas.
- * Clash of Islam and Christianity.

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- * Flawed political order in many countries, with the politicians keeping alive issues to retain their power hold on a country.
 - * Mankind distancing itself from their respective religions, which were always a binding force for a cohesive societal order.
 - * The reckless spread of nuclear and conventional weaponry in developed states.
3. The cure for the above is the remedies for a peaceful world order.
 4. The conclusion is that there is hope for world peace, provided we all make it our business to fight for it at every forum.

Sustainable Development : The Sikh Perspective

Surjit Kaur Chahal*

We see unlimited progress around us. The only limits to progress are human creativity and policy. The whole and sole aim of our actions today is development. By development and progress we merely mean material development. Traditionally human beings have taken the view the nature is created simply for man. The philosophy of Bacon was the Charter of the Industrial Revolution. Bacon said "Let the human race recover that right over nature, which belongs to it by Divine Bequest."¹ It was such an attitude towards nature which has led to the present development. The west was always interested in external material progress.

In contrast with this the Sikh Gurus looked down upon mere material progress. They stressed upon both material as well as internal progress. Internal progress was considered as having more value. They stressed the need to search within rather than the material world. Nature was not regarded as having merely instrumental value. God dwells in nature. Therefore nature is not created solely for mankind, but it has a right of its own. Global ecological crisis has arisen because we think we have a right to use nature as we wish to. We are unconcerned about the effects of our actions on nature. We are using more than that what the earth can replace. Till now we have been closing our eyes towards the ecological threat. We have been thinking like a rabbit. We think that if we close our eyes the danger will be over. We have been closing our

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eyes towards the ecological threat. We automatically go away. Today, we cannot do that any more. The Ecological threat us at three levels:

- a) There is a serious danger to the environment by factories, industries, and automobiles. But in spite of the fact that there is unbreatheable air, we consider every rise in consumption as a progress.
- b) Global environmental pollution caused by the emission of greenhouse gases especially Carbon di-Oxide. Global warming is also caused by cutting down forests. The ecological threat to nature by human culture is rising alarmingly.
- c) The third level at which the ecological threat is rising is at the personal level.

We always think that something has to be done at the governmental level or by science or by someone else. We do not realize each one of us has a major role to play. Each one of us needs to limit our consumption in every way, be it petrol, diesel, water, food. It is high time that we realize the need to tread lightly on the earth. We should realize that ecological ethics is the center stage for this millennium. We need to examine our lifestyles. We need to examine the meaning of economic growth and development. Economic growth has lowered rather than raised our standard of living, which includes time spent with family and friends, enjoyment of a rich human and natural environment. Consumption provides an entity into a complex set of problems. Impositions of gadgets and malls add to the rat race. We are so optimistic about technology that we feel technology is the answer to all our problems. We require to change our consciousness and also we need to support this change with the creation of appropriate institutions and structures that hold a genuine promise of a better of life. Further economic growth and consumption are not the solution. One finds greater depression in precisely those countries that have experienced or are currently experiencing rapid economic growth. Friendship

and other social supports are antidotes to depression. The Sikh Scripture states, religiosity, a turning inwards, meditation, altruism that will lead to lesser jealousy, lesser feelings of domination the other will reduce depression.

Today all of us are releasing toxic gases into the atmosphere through our automobiles, our gadgets. These gases are as deadly and toxic as the gases in the gas chambers of the Nazis. But do we ever stop and think? Do we ever consider ourselves immoral? Are we not responsible for the increasing ecological threat to the planet? Can we merely blame others? I think it is high time we change our concept of morality. Today we require not merely traditional ethics but an ecological ethic. Earlier greed was regarded as undesirable. Sikhism believes in living with minimum requirements and hoarding is looked down upon. Contentment being a desirable value for the Sikhs, the ethics of consumption is not there in Sikhism. However, today Sikhs have also started aping the west. Under the impact of Western civilization, desire in no more considered to be a state of the sick soul. On the contrary a person's status is dependent upon his material possessions. The more he desires, the more he possesses. The insatiable desire is continuously being fuelled by science and technology. We no longer are searching ourselves from within, which is a value prescribed by our Gurus.² Our aim is not to conquer ourselves but rather to conquer others. We try to conquer others by dominating over them. Our desire to dominate and show our superiority is reaching ever-increasing levels. We dominate over the others by our material possessions. These possessions are possible only by exploiting nature. We are thereby continuously exploiting it without paying heed to its consequences.

Earlier too, there has been the affluent class, which has been exploiting. But this class could enjoy the fruits of human labour only. Therefore the pace of exploitation of nature was slow. Today, science and technology is feeding our desires at such a terrific pace that the exploitation of nature is taking

place very ,very fast. The demand being placed on Earth is more than what the earth can give. We have started believing that ever- rising levels of consumption will solve all our problems. We are feeding our egoistic tendencies, our urge to dominate over the other. As pointed out by Erazim Kohak, limitless egoism elevated to a civilization strategy is not sustainable. We require to search within ourselves and see what are the desirable traits, which will help us to live in harmony with the planet earth.

Paul Santmire said, "The earth is in danger of destruction". A time has come today when we are all feeling the pinch of the environmental crisis towards which we are heading. This environmental crisis is engulfing us at such a rapid speed that we can no longer neglect it saying that it is an affair of the environmentalists. We all need to address ourselves to this and try to reduce if not reverse or stop the environmental deterioration.

Sikhism is not against development. It does not preach asceticism. It encourages progress and development. However, one point to be remembered is that if we look at the Sikh theology, it does not prescribe anthropocentric development or egocentric development. It preaches altruism, which will in its turn lead to sustainable development. The 'I' when it expands it not only includes the others who are belonging to my family but it includes the whole earth as my family. It prescribes co-operation in place of domination. Co-operation leads to humility. According to the Sikh metaphysics, I am related to the entire universe. It therefore prescribes development in which the environment is not exploited or subdued. How can I be justified in exploiting that to which I am closely related?

Thus Sikhism prescribes sustainable development. Sustainability is the capacity to keep going indefinitely. Development could be defined, as bringing out what is latent, bringing out potentialities. But while doing so, the present and the future have all to be taken into account. World

Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its 1987 report, *Our Common Future* Defined Sustainable Development as: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs." While discussing sustainability the focus is on two issues, viz, meeting the needs of the present generation and not to undermine the ability of future generations of people to achieve acceptable standards of living themselves. There are four factors that threaten the well being of the present and the future generations viz, population, pollution, resource use and consumption. An increase in any one or all these factors causes imbalance and furthers the ecological crisis causing devastation. When a Sikh daily prays and asks for the welfare of all, he/she says, *Sarbat da Bhalla*. This welfare of all includes welfare of all-present as well as future. A development which does not consider the welfare of the future is proscribed.

Sustainable development raises various ethical issues. These have two main thrusts, viz, social justice and the other concerns for future generations. Sustainable development implies that we should not proceed with our development, researches and progressive plans without taking into account the needy around us and the well being of the future generations. We have a positive duty to help those in need. In this connection there are different views. Those who propound the Life boat ethics hold the view that if you help people who are starving there will be more people suffering half a century later. Garret Hardin holds the view that we should not attempt to equalize. If we feed people who cannot look after themselves they will produce more of their kind. Let them fend for themselves or else perish. On the contrary Peter Singer holds the view that those of us with surplus wealth should share it with the unfortunate and needy. Singer believes in helping starving babies rather than buying that new car or suit. Hardin's plan is to control human population by the

policy of survival of the fittest. Our Gurus have stressed on contentment, on inner progress and on consideration of the welfare of others. They emphasised "*Pichhon bachia aap khaavanda*". i.e. only whatever remains after feeding others, a true sikh eats that. Thus if this is our attitude, we would automatically help the poor and the needy. They have emphasized on helping those in need. (*Gau garib di Raksha*) only that development/progress is acceptable which is sustainable. Not only the present needy have to be given justice but the future generations too have to be taken care of. American population is very low as compared to the third world countries but its consumption is the biggest in the world and has increased tenfold since 1960 as pointed by Erazim Kohak in "The Green Halo". This clearly indicates that reducing population levels is not a magic solution to all our environmental problems. It requires a deeper thinking and a change of our attitude. Thus Hardin's way of thinking which is opposite to that of the Sikh Gurus, does not really help in sustainable development. We need to work for a sustainable society. Population Control will definitely reduce pollution and the consumption. But as seen above from the example of the Americans we require a change of our attitude, rather than a mechanical reduction of population.

Due to our lackadaisical attitude we use modern gadgets, technological innovations and spoil the environment. Also we deplete the resources of the environment. In this regard our Gurus have stressed *Sanjam*, i.e. control and moderation. Anyone who believes in moderation will not waste the resources of nature. In the name of development, we devastate nature. In this connection Guru Nanak Devji says that man is just a speck of dust in this universe. The universe is made by God and man is just a part of it like any other part. No doubt he is higher because he alone has the capacity for self-realisation, however, this does not give him a license to use/spoil nature as he desires. Nature is independent of man, exists in its own right. Man can use it wherever necessary but he

must at the same time realise the intrinsic worth of nature. The universe is a complex web of relations. Each individual human being is interlinked with others, with animals as well as with the ecosphere. Once we have knowledge of the complex web of relations, our attitudes towards nature will see God immanent in it and therefore realize its intrinsic worth. Once we see God immanent in His creation, we will identify ourselves with the creation and the result would be respect, concern for nature and we would realize that we are part of nature and if we try to bring any changes in it, any changes in its homeostatic balance, it would have repercussions on us. Whatever relation is there in the macrocosm it is there in the microcosm. Thus in order to understand the universe and its complex web of relations we have to look within our-self, realize our potential and realize our-self. The knowledge of the universe will automatically follow. Our development will be sustainable development and not selfish, egoistic, short lived development. Once we have knowledge of the complex web of relations, our attitudes towards nature will automatically change. We will no longer want to exploit it but will rather make friends with it, will see God immanent in it and therefore realize its intrinsic worth. Once we see God immanent in his creation, we will identify ourselves with the creation and the result would be respect, concern for nature, we would realize that we are part of nature and if we try to bring any changes in it, any changes in its homeostatic balance, it would have repercussions on us.

The Sikh religion preaches unity in diversity. A self-realized person sees this unity and once he sees this unity he no longer exploits nature, he rather respects it as a 'House of the Lord' in which dwells the Lord. Such a person will always vouch for sustainable development, for he cannot but think of the well being of the present, future generations as well as the entire ecosystem. Sustainable development understood in this way would entail a positive obligation to assist present generations and a negative obligation not to hinder future

generations. We could hinder the development of future generations. It could be done in a variety of ways by depleting resources, by storing radioactive waste unsafely, by diminishing biodiversity, by bringing about climate change and by causing other kinds of pollution. We all can play a role in providing a safe liveable environment to the future generation for e.g. if I use public transport, walk wherever I can instead of using my car, avoid usage of the air-conditioner or at least switch it off whenever not needed, I can reduce pollution. Every air conditioner releases CFC'S causing holes in the ozone layer which protects us from sun's ultraviolet radiation. By the holes in this layer we are exposing the people to ultra violet radiation which causes skin cancer. Similarly we can use scarce resources such as water, electricity, food, judiciously. We need not go back to the stone age and live in the dark but we can certainly go in for sustainable development and sustainable ways of living.

Some would oppose sustainable development on the pretext that science and technology will find alternative ways, alternative resources. Yes this does not seem a very attractive proposal but is it really so? The alternative to electricity may be nuclear energy but is it without its accompanying danger? The problem of nuclear waste disposal, the possibility of nuclear accidents, all these make us question such development. We cannot say it is sustainable, for it puts the future generation at a considerable risk.

Similarly the developments in genetic engineering are questionable. Gene therapy promises a very bright future to medicine. Many incurable diseases will be curable. However, is this development sustainable or does it raise ethical and religious issues? Similarly genetic engineering would make it possible for us to create clones, to engineer animals genetically so that we could use them for organ transplantation. However, it is really questionable as to would such a development be sustainable. For one thing, by genetically engineering animals for xenotransplantation, we re not

treating them as ends in themselves but as a means to human ends. Secondly, by creating new species we are trying to become co-creators with God. Sikhism questions such development. However, Sikh Gurus state "*Poorai ka kia sabh kichh poora ghat wadh kichh nahi*". (Guru Granth Sahib, p.1412) meaning God has made this world complete. The imperfections that are there in the world as we perceive them are all under the Will of God. He does not need man's help to perfect the world. In fact if we go around genetically modifying organisms this could result in creation of new organisms which would be too dangerous. Such development may lead to disaster and would not be sustainable. It is better we live with what is the time tested genetic diversity rather than tamper with it and perhaps even reduce the genetic diversity. Sikhism also prescribes such genetic engineering and genetic therapy which is unsustainable in the longer run even though initially it looks very attractive and useful. Genetic engineering treats the entire plant and animal as a means rather than as an end. These species are genetically engineered to serve human purposes. As regards human genetic engineering for the purpose of cure, most scientists accept the fact that the process of human genetic engineering is risky and the process will itself generate new mutations which will be passed on to future generations. There is a need for looking back into the past and learning from the past experiences. However, we must remember that our human creativity depends upon our human brain. Any alteration of man that would injure the brain and hence his very creativity would indeed be a disastrous mutilation, especially if this were to be transmitted genetically, thus further polluting the gene pool with defects which might be hidden and incalculable. Sikhism also proscribes such genetic engineering and genetic therapy which is unsustainable in the longer run even though initially it looks very attractive and useful.

Thus scientific advances should not be made just for the sake of mere progress or research. Sikhism prevent us from

trying to be co-creators with God. Development of this type can never be sustainable but would rather be disastrous. If we start playing with Genes, we are 'playing God.' We are very finite beings knowing only our present and past. Our future too is unpredictable. It is not possible for us to know the long term consequences of our actions. When we genetically engineer organism, we are trying to create new organisms, a new type of a world. We think we have the power to create. Do we really have this power? We must be humble. We are like a speck of dust. Guru Nanak says, that we finite beings cannot know the limit of God. If we cannot know God, how can we 'play God'? How can we bring about creation? If we do so, our action would lead to disastrous results and we would not know how to reverse our action. Especially in case of genetically engineered organisms it may not be possible for us to reverse the process. Ideally man should adjust himself to the environment. He should let nature take its course and not interfere with it either by miracles or by science. This is what is called as Hukam in Sikhism or accepting the Will of God or the Law of Nature. Heidegger states "in technology we make object according to some blueprint that we determine. We design things to satisfy our purpose rather than allow our purposes to be affected by, and find creative expression through, the qualities of the objects themselves."

Today we are not satisfied with mere artefacts designed to serve our purposes. We are now aiming at nature, animals and humans designed to serve our purpose. How arrogant and selfish we have become. Thus genetic engineering is questionable because it goes against the very basic principle of Sikhism, viz, the world as it is created is best. God knows what is right and wrong. He has designed the laws of nature, creation and dissolution. Man has no right to interfere and bring about genetic changes.

The question which faces us today is, what is the root cause of our ecological crisis. Is it human greed or a flawed technology which is unsustainable?

There are two extremes, on the one hand we have the have nots who are dying of hunger and starvation. On the other hand in the western countries and even in our country we have the 'haves' who are becoming goods rich and time poor, dying of stress and over consumption. These people are addicted to consume the Earth itself. They consume because others consume. There is a rat race of consumption. We think that we would be happier if we consume and as Paul Wachtel claims - nothing is "as naively utopian as continuing on our present course and hoping for a deus ex machina by the name of "technology" to bail us out at the last minute."³

Some environmentalists oppose the idea of sustainability for in this the environment does not have any intrinsic value of its own. It is only for humans, the present and the future humans. According to Sikhism, the environment exists for itself, it has its own intrinsic worth. Just as God created humans whenever He so desired under His Will, similarly, the entire universe is His Creation, created under His Will. He is immanent in it. I have a duty to look after another human being who is in need and also have a duty to take care not to harm the non-existent future generations, I also have a duty not to harm the environment. I have a positive duty to work for the sustainability of the environment. In fact to help others I need to realise that they are part of the complex web of relations found in the ecosystem. Thus I cannot help others in need without taking care of the environment or by destroying it. In this context Sikhism would define sustainable development in such a way that it includes not only human society but biodiversity, ecological integrity and ecosystemic processes. Thus even though these processes may not appear to be directly useful, they have to be sustained. A point worth mentioning here is that with the growing human population, a time may come when human needs conflict with the needs of the environment per se. Thus sustainability of the society may conflict with the sustainability of the environment. What should take priority? If we say that humans, since they have

more worth, they take priority, are we not merely paying lip service while affirming the intrinsic value of ecosystems. Is it ethical to help the human needy by damaging the ecosystems? I feel that a deeper look and analysis of the problems would reveal to us that since we humans are merely parts of the complex whole, no good can really result by damaging the ecosystem. We have to strike a balance between good of humans and of the ecosystem although this is not an easy proposal.

To sum up, we can say that discussions on sustainable development center around issues of social justice and the future generations. The main issues that are considered are population, consumption, resource use and pollution. In the context of all these Sikhism definitely prescribes moderation. Once moderation exercised in intimate interpersonal relations automatically the population would be controlled. As regards consumption, Sikhism prescribes an attitude of contentment, non domination over the other, humility *vand chhakna* and *sarabat da bhala*. With such an attitude, the spirit of competition will be subdued. It will be replaced by spirit of co-operation, helping the other whether presently existent or the non-existent future generations. As regards resource use, moderation and a spirit of non-domination brings about lesser wastage of the resources of nature. Also a concern for the others end and a recognition of the intrinsic value of the ecosystem makes us utilise the ecosystem with care so that the benefit that we and the future generations will draw from it will be Sustainable. According to the Sikh understanding of sustainable development human autonomy and common good do not conflict.

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 O human being search your own heart every day, and do not wander around in confusion.
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Humanistic Vision in *Guru Granth Sahib*

Anita Mehrotra*

The term humanism has been defined in various ways. Humanism has variety of meanings but are often very vague. According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy* humanism means 'The intellectual movement that characterized the culture of Renaissance in Europe. Renaissance students of the literature of classical Greece and Rome-especially Greece-were called humanists. Such students were optimistic about human possibilities, attended enthusiastically to human achievement, and eschewed refined enquiries into theological niceties. However, in this sense, humanism was perfectly consistent with belief in God and a particular Christian and even Roman Catholic devotion, as, for instance, in Erasmus'. Humanism in *Webster's World Encyclopedia* 2001 has been described as :

Historically, a movement that arose with the Italian Renaissance, in the writings of Ficino, Pico, and later Erasmus and More. The humanist..... emphasized the centrality of human achievement and potential, in opposition to many of the claims of dogmatic theology and science.

There are numerous definitions of humanism but one thing is very clear that humanism is a philosophy which focuses upon human needs, human problems and human welfare. Humanists value human life. One finds that "Humanism is in tune with today's enlightened social thought. Humanists are committed to civil liberties, human rights, church-state separation, the extension of participatory democracy not only

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in government but in the work place and education,and open-ended approach to solving social; problems, an approach that allows for the testing of new alternatives.”¹ Humanists recognize human capabilities, human interests and ideals.

A cursory glance would give the idea that in Sikh Philosophy one finds spirituo-ethical humanism where there is deep urge to uplift the masses. Guru Nanak, the originator of Sikh religion, can be best described as a prophet. He was greatly moved by the continued tyranny, treachery and bloodshed and the resultant feeling of insecurity amongst the masses. All this was instrumental in moulding his attitude towards life and this in turn led to a robust harmony between spiritual and social life. Religion thus provides ethical directive to life. It is only in and through this world that a man can achieve the highest goal. This world is understood to have the spiritual significance. Guru Nanak realized the preciousness of life in this world and proclaimed that ‘the body is the palace, the temple, the house of God. Into it He has put His Light’. The body is to be used as an instrument of spiritual gain and service to mankind. Human life gives an individual the opportunity to develop himself personally and to do good to other. Sikhism admits that worldly life has spiritual significance in being a part of God's universal purpose. So this life is to be accepted and considered to be an occasion for imparting responsible conduct. According to Guru Nanak “there can be no life of good conduct without the experience of God. This only means that you cannot separate a man's conduct in the world from his insight of God—the two are the manifestations of the One Lord....”²

In the thirty fourth stanza of Japji, (the aphoristic of *Guru Granth Sahib*), it is said that the whole cosmos has been created by the almighty and this earth has been considered as an abode of duty. This earth is thus a platform for fulfillment of moral, social and other obligations. Thus the world is not sinful and to be born is not a curse “It would be noted that the world is presented as the seat of Dharma and is therefore

invested with goodness and nobility. It is not some thing evil to be despised".³

John. B. Chethimattam in the article, 'The Secular Religion of Guru Nanak' very rightly said, 'Religion has its obligations not up in the clouds but in midst of everyday life. A truly religious man has to live in the midst of the common people ministering of their needs and facing their problems.' This world has been rightly described as Dharmashetra as well as the Karmashetra. One has to be the *karma yogi* of Gita. Guru Nanak spoke of the deeply religious man as a social man. He held the view that it is in and through the world, performing social and moral duties and obligations towards one's fellow beings, one can reach God. He felt that those who forsake the world in search of God are in fact oblivious of their duties. Active worldly life is in no way considered to be antithetical to pious and noble life. The earth is not seized by sin and the rejection of worldly life is not acceptable to the Sikh Gurus. It is said that "...at no place did Guru Nanak portray this world as a vale of tears, misery and unhappiness. He subscribed to the philosophy of world and life affirmation; it is a world in which the lord himself lives and therefore, life should be rich, full of work and activity. He condemned renunciation and monasticism and, through his own example advocated the life of householder and taught that salvation could be attained through life of noble action."⁴ K.A. Nizami in his paper on 'Some Social and Religious ideals of Guru Nanak' says 'to Guru Nanak human greatness did not lie in asceticism or isolation from the energizing currents of social life. He advocated a way of life which allowed for the discharge of civic obligation with the spiritual'. The real spirit and true substance of religion consists in the role it plays in the lives of individuals and the society.

Five hundred years ago Guru Nanak preached the most cherished ideals in the world today- justice, equality, liberty and fraternity which are needed to create a new society where there will be end to discord and disunity. Guru Nanak

cherished these values greatly and preached people to practise it in thought, word and deed. He felt that it was not only the social responsibility of State and government but also of each individual to create conditions and act positively to promote peace and amity among people. The view of the life and reality thus paves the ways for greater understanding of social thought of the Sikh Gurus which would help achieve the ideals, whose relevance and need is deeply felt in today's world.

Guru Nanak realizing the preciousness of the human life wished to create an ideal human society free from discrimination and discord. He had felt that 'more food and fire, man's need was sympathy and brotherhood'.⁵ 'He proclaimed that the law of the life for the human being was to love one another to find God through loving devotion'⁶.

Guru Nanak is often referred to as a role missionary and a great revolutionary, K.A.Nizami says that :

"The universality of his message, combined with a dynamic approach to religion, be it humanism, and concern for the outcastes and downtrodden, immensely raised his stature in the eyes of his contemporaries

Guru Nanak felt that the suffering of the people was due to religious anarchy, rigidity of caste system, supremacy of the ecclesiastics and escapism. He felt that the disunity amongst the people was caused by the diversity of the faith and belief. He abhorred the polytheistic attitude accepted by the Hindus. Guru Nanak realized the need of the hour and thus laid emphasis on the belief in One and only God. Guru Nanak proclaimed :

'There is no Hindu, There is no Musalman.'

Macauliffe states that the Sikh interpretation to the statement that both the Hindus and Muslims have forgotten the precepts of their respective religions. It may be true but this statement has come to mean that Guru Nanak had asked the people to rise above the narrow attitude which tends to

divide and destroy the unity of mankind. Guru Nanak's life imparted message of religious tolerance. He preached love for one's fellow beings and to live peacefully. Guru Nanak exhorted people to cultivate an ethic which could bring peace and harmony in the society.

Guru Nanak referred to all human beings as equal for they all share something in common. Divine Light is the life giving force in all beings. All beings are created by his Own Light. When in One Light all beings have their origin how could there be any distinction based on religion, caste and creed. It is only an imagination of human mind. In the court of God all are equal. No one is either good or bad. That is why it is said

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਣ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ ॥⁷

Guru Nanak strongly rejected the idea of masses being divided into various sections. He regarded caste system as a biased social structure which could only lead to discord and disintegration. Guru Nanak could not make any distinction for he regarded the whole mankind, as emanated from the light of the lord. He could not regard man as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. He emphasized on the fact that there is no one high or low⁸. In raga Asa it is said:

ਜਾਣਹੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਨ ਪੂਛਹੁ ਜਾਤੀ ਆਗੈ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਹੇ ॥⁹

Dr. Ajit Singh Sikka in his book '*Facets of Guru Nanak's Thought*' has beautifully described that Guru Nanak replaced the term 'jat' (caste) and instead he coined the word 'joti' meaning thereby that the Divine Spark is present in all being and thus the question of difference or caste doesn't arise.

In Guru Nanak's philosophy God has been referred to as *Nirvair* i.e. he is without enmity. On the basis of this Guru Nanak emphasized upon the ideal society which is free from any animosity. This could be achieved only if there is no one high or low, where all are equal irrespective of their social position, caste, creed and religion..

Guru Nanak's life was a message itself. He not only taught ideals but ardently practiced it. So equality for him was not just a theoretical injunction but was translated into practice by introducing the unifying institution of *Langar*. Guru Nanak initiated the institution of *Langar* and his successors Guru Angad and Guru Amardas further developed and strengthened it. Guru Nanak felt the system of *guru-ka-langer* is the real test of equality. He thus paved the way for most cherished ideals in today's world. Community kitchen system in fact meant to strengthen the equality and brotherhood in the society. Free kitchen system which leads to the contribution from one's hard earned money enthused the spirit of sacrifice and service to the mankind. Institution of *Langar* thus became a symbol of service to other fellow beings. Guru Nanak said that 'the person who eats what ever he has earned by his labour and gives some to others is the one who really knows the true way'¹⁰. Guru Nanak laid great emphasis on '*sewa*' the spirit of service. By humble and devoted service the mind and body is purified. This is the path of truly religious man.

Implicating God who is *karta purakh* ceaselessly at work, One should be an active agent working for the promotion of all human beings. One should possess goodwill for all and should be ready to render service to other. It is said 'the *Gurmukh* or the true follower according to *Siddha Gosti*' is morally bound to be working truthfully by surrendering his work to God through meditation'¹¹. At the same time one should be willing to contribute for the common cause from ones hard earned money. Creativity and dynamism are the qualities of a real social man, *Gurmukh* in action adheres to the great Indian principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam*. Guru Nanak wished to make society a gathering of such realized persons.

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Bhakti as Protest

Rohini M. Punekar*

Chokhamela: his life and poetry

The bhakti movement, though largely associated with medieval India, begins in a recognizable movement with the Alvar saints of the south somewhere in the ninth century CE and goes in a seemingly random and arbitrary fashion across the subcontinent, different regions and communities catching incandescent fire from previous movements; till, as it is sometimes observed, it blossoms into the *satyagraha* movement across the whole country under Gandhi. It was a wave of social, religious and spiritual enquiry. This deeply spiritual and democratizing movement is characterised by the emergence of many religious communities and groups revolutionary in spirit in almost every region of the country. Perhaps the new spirit was a result of an exposure to a more egalitarian religion-Islam, which the Muslim invasions had made possible. The bhakti movement was a questioning of the orthodox and repressive brahminical understanding of Hinduism and as such made it possible for the lower castes and women to give a form to their religious aspirations, emphasizing devotion and love, not knowledge as a means of salvation. In a newfound burst of confidence it relocated the *bhakti marg*, the way of devotion, in the pursuit of salvation. In Maharashtra (the Marathi speaking western region of India) this democratizing devotional passion seems to have mainly precipitated the varkari community in the thirteenth century.

The Varkaris are devotees of Vitthal, affectionately

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known as Vithoba, the deity at Pandharpur, a small town on the banks of Chandrabhaga, a tributary of the river Bhim. Not much is known about the history of the temple: when it was built or who built it. But there is a poignant story about how Vithoba came to stay at Pandharpur which attests to the mysterious nature of spiritual experience. Vithoba, the god himself came to see Pundalik, a sage from the neighbouring state of Karnataka, well-known for his extreme piety and goodness. Pundalik, who was devoted to his parents, was attending to their needs when Vitthal appeared. Throwing a brick for the god to stand on, for Chandrabhaga was in spate, Pundalik promised to return after finishing his work. He never managed to come back; and Vithoba is caught in stone, hands on hips, standing on a brick, endlessly waiting for his *bhakt*. The story, the image, the river and the sands evoke a powerful magnetic response, and year after year, thousands of Varkaris make a pilgrimage on foot to have a darshan of the god. In fact to be a Varkari is to make this pilgrimage at regular intervals, not alone, but amongst a community of pilgrims belonging to various castes-high and low, and hailing from different parts of Maharashtra, all converging towards Pandharpur singing the abhangs-the hymns which the saint-poets of this tradition wrote. Varkari literally means one who makes the to and fro journey, the vari. For the fifty odd saint-poets belonging to this tradition, drawn from almost all castes of the region of those times, the *abhang* is the most important medium of comprehending, reaching and expressing the sense of divine mystery and joy; it is also the means of articulating injustice. It is a modification of the folk verse form-the *ovi*-which is traditionally the form for women's songs. Like the *dohas* of Kabir which bear his signature in the last line, the *abhang* too is signed off by the poet composing them. *Abhangs* are sung by entire groups of people, even today, when on foot on the yearly pilgrimage to Pandharpur.

The fascination that Vithoba holds for these saint poets stands out, clearly illuminated by the story of Pundalik. The

story reverses the normative understanding of the divine: divinity here waits endlessly for the *bhakt*, the devotee; it is this divine lack, in a sense, which empowers the Varkaris' sense of overwhelming devotion. In a curious fashion and unlike the luxuriant descriptions of godheads in Hinduism, Vitthal is identified not by a myths and stories surrounding him, but by stories about the saint poets. The mythology of Vitthal is in a sense the mythology of the saint poets. He is given shape and form and substance by the devotion of the Varkaris: by himself he is almost quality-less. The physical image of the god too is unlike most other images in Hindu iconography. He stands arms akimbo without the terrifying arsenal carried by the many-armed Hindu deities. Though Vitthal is a *swaroop* of Vishnu, not an *avtaar*, he is identified sometimes with the child Krishna and is called, oddly enough for an image in black stone, Panduranga, which means the white one, and which is the name for Shiva.

We can now look at the saint poets themselves, at their lives and how their hearts turned in devotion to Vithoba, at the untouchable saint poet Chokhamela in particular whose life captures the paradigmatic ambiguity of Hinduism: its liberating intellectual and spiritual plurality on the one hand and its unethical and unjust social praxis on the other. His is perhaps one of the first (if not the very first) marginalised voices in Indian history. There is very little in the way of a recorded history of Chokhamela's life. The figure who looms out of the mists of the last seven centuries takes shape from legends and fleeting references to seemingly real life situations in his own poetry and that of the other saint-poets of his times. Chokha was a *mahar*, one of the lowest in the Hindu hierarchy of castes, and as such his duties too seem to have involved, like others in his situation, tasks menial in nature. *Mahars*, as other untouchables, are considered outcastes- not a part of the social fold at all: their identity in society is shaped through a series of negations. Perhaps it is important, at this juncture, to stress the difference between the lower castes who form the

fourth *varna* or category in the Hindu society of four *varnas* (of which the upper three are considered the superior twice-born categories), and the outcastes, who form the unnamed fifth *varna*, and are not reckoned as a legitimate part of society. The *mahars* were thought to be impure because traditionally their task was to perform all the tasks relating to the cleaning of the village; they were untouchable because their touch or even proximity was considered polluting: their very identity was formed of these negations. Generally, an outcaste was not paid; he was expected to live off the leftovers given by the upper-castes. He was denied education, knowledge of the scriptures, access to the facilities of the village such as the use of the well, and crucially, he was forbidden entry into the temple. These denials, especially the last, are important preoccupations in Chokha's poetry.

Chokhamela then was an untouchable saint of this tradition; that he wrote poetry at all is a matter of astonishment. Amongst his contemporaries are the important figures of Jnaneshwar, the late thirteenth century revolutionary brahmin philosopher and saint-poet, with whom the Varkari tradition really begins and Namdev, the lower-caste rebel saint and poet, a calico-printer by profession, under whose wide and generous understanding of spirituality blossomed many saint-poets largely drawn from the lower and marginalised ranks of society.

Presumably Chokha's spiritual leanings were given direction by Namdev: Chokha acknowledges him as his guru in many of his poems. He seems to have been instrumental in recognising Chokha's devotion and getting him as far as the great doors of the temple at Pandharpur, but either even Namdev lacked total conviction, or the brahmin priests, who loom large in Chokha's poems, thrust him out unable to countenance the 'untouchable' *mahar* polluting the divinity. Chokha's habitual place seems to have been at the outer doors of the temple, on the threshold. His poems quite simply and humbly refer to his standing there, quite without self-pity and

certainly without rancour. This literal and symbolic stance of the saint-poet and the quietude in the voice are devastatingly moving. It may perhaps be noted that there exists a body of well-known stories, orally handed down for generations, narrating incidents from his life. It is quite probable that the poems have fed the stories and that these have acquired colour and depth over the years. However, there seems to be an individual voice and personality in the collection of his *abhangs*, numbering over three hundred, that is real and authentic. It is the quality of this voice and the stories around the person that have to serve in place of documented history. It is interesting to see how the poems merge into legend so that in the popular imagination of the Varkaris the two exist in a seamless continuum.

One may perhaps examine an instance of how myth and poem weave into each other. A well-known story goes like this. One day Chokha was standing at the door of the temple from morning till late in the evening, somewhat hopeless and unusually cast down. Towards nightfall, the priests locked up the doors and went away. As Chokha stood there, still and lone, Vitthoba himself came out, exclaimed in distress to see Chokha patiently waiting, embraced him, led him by the hand to the innermost sanctum, where he lovingly held him to his breast. The night was spent in the union of the *bhakt* with the god, after which Vitthoba playfully removed his *tulsi* garland (a garland made of basil seeds which the Varkaris wear as a mark of their identity) and put it around Chokha's neck. When the day dawned, he led him out of the temple, still with the garland. Chokha, in a state of bliss after this vouchsafing of divine love, lay down on the sands of the river in a trance. At the temple the priests discovered that Vitthoba's gold necklace had disappeared and remembering that Chokha had been at the temple doors last, went into transports of rage over the fact that the temple and diety were polluted and the necklace stolen. Search parties found Chokha still dazed and uncomprehending, but with a gold necklace around the neck.

He was punished; tied to the bullocks and about to be dragged to death but for the animals who stood their ground, despite the whip lashing them. The story ends with Vitthoba revealing himself to the entire company, holding the bullocks by the horns.

The poem, however, dramatises Chokha's plea to Vitthoba in the midst of his humiliating position. The incensed priests lashing the whip, the bullocks, the crowd of people are frozen in the background, a silence is drawn on the flurry of activity; what is voiced are Chokha's anguished words to his god. The poem makes no mention of Vitthal's public revelation; it nevertheless makes an ambiguous reference to a secret shared between them :

They thrash me, Vithu,
now don't walk so slow.
The pandits whip,
some crime, don't know what:
How did Vithoba's necklace come round your throat,
they curse and strike
and say I polluted you.
Do not send the cur at your door away,
giver of everything.
You, Chakrapani,
yours is the deed.
With folded hands Chokha begs
I revealed our secret,
don't turn away.

This poem is one of a few others that dramatise situations. But the entire collection communicates a range and depth of emotion that is surely of immense value. The deprivations—material and religious, that constantly hemmed him in, and the humiliations that pushed him beyond the caste boundaries evoke by turns a resigned wonder at unjust and hypocritical human constructions, a philosophic calm, despair and sometimes anguish. Some poems reveal bliss; an ecstasy of

affirmation. They work towards an awareness that it is not only divine love that empowers him, but also, perhaps more importantly, *his* devotion that empowers Vitthoba. Some poems subtly play up the paradox that Vitthoba, the holiest of the holy, touches, eats with, and embraces him, Chokha—the impure outcaste, a loving favour not extended to the touchable brahmin priests. He is rarely angry, but sometimes he does strip away facades of religious humbug to expose human cruelties. Chokhamela's poetry, in short, quietly reverses normative understanding of divinity and social structure.

What about posterity? In the living tradition of the Varkari community Chokha's *abhangs* continue to be sung, not only by the 'lower' castes but also by communities of pilgrims. He remains in popular memory and currency. But he has never received as much prominence say, as Namdev or Tukaram, other lower caste saint-poets. It is not difficult to see that his *mahar* identity is the main reason for the half-neglect. Where secular politics is concerned the scene changes diametrically. In the twentieth century, especially during the Indian nationalist movement and after independence, there has been a great mobilisation of the former untouchables under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar who was from the *mahar* community, was an outstanding leader, intellectual and scholar; it was he who framed the Constitution of free India; he was perhaps the most radical and committed leader of the marginalised. Today the erstwhile untouchables call themselves the Dalits, which literally means 'ground down'. A very significant outcome of the Dalit movement, primarily a struggle for social and political empowerment, was the mass conversion of thousands of Dalits (a majority of whom were *mahars*) to Buddhism in the lifetime of the leader. The Dalit movement is a strong presence in contemporary Maharashtra, especially in the work of a group of revolutionary writers called the Dalit Panthers. Though Chokhamela's voice is perhaps the first dalit voice in terms of interrogating the caste

structure, his protest is contained in bhakti. The contemporary Dalit movement could not trace the trajectory of its history from this early fourteenth century poet, rejecting as it did the social and religious underpinnings of the Hindu caste structure; its vision is to claim a secular political and cultural space, uncontested by dogma. If Chokhamela's Dalit identity lessens his prominence as a Varkari saint-poet, his association with bhakti detracts from his Dalit identity.¹

It is clear that the peculiar dichotomy in which Chokha was caught within his lifetime: his outcaste identity on the one hand and his Vitthoba bhakti on the other, seems to spill over and continue down the centuries with paradoxical ramifications. This conjunction of bhakti and marginalisation is embodied in the tone of his poems. Chokha questions pollution and untouchability. Consider the following poem :

Vedas and the shastras
 polluted; puranas inauspicious
 impure; the body, the soul
 contaminated; the manifest
 Being is the same.
 Brahma polluted, Vishnu too;
 Shankar is impure, inauspicious.
 Birth impure, dying is impure:
 says Chokha,
 pollution stretches
 without beginning and end.

He is too intelligent not to perceive the self-interest of the powerful classes behind the façade of religion, but such instances of pure anger are rare. More typically his heart full of love seems to melt anger into understanding. His joyous belief in god is weighed by the sorrow of things; his anguish contained in quietude.

It is said that Chokha died along with other *mahar* labourers when a part of the fort they were helping build at the town of Mangalved collapsed on them. The legend goes

that Chokha's friend and guru Namdev went to find his remains and picked up those bones that murmured 'Vitthal, Vitthal'. The bones were buried at the bottom of the steps *outside* the gate of the main temple where Chokha was accustomed to stand all day long in worship. A shrine is built there today in Chokha's honour. In a way Chokha continues to be at the threshold; from another perspective, the devotee has to visit Chokha's shrine before climbing up to Vitthoba.

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Sabad Guru : Universality and Practical Reality

Inderjit Kaur*

The *Sabad Guru* technology, embodied in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, is not just for the Sikhs. This technology is available to everyone, so that human being can have the capacity to attain a deep and personal experience of the religion of his or her own choosing, for we are all created from a common pattern, and every human is filled with the Light of the same Creator.

The *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is Unique. It is unique, because not only it is the container of the divine technology of *Sabad Guru*, which is so necessary for living a spiritual and conscious life in the 21st Century, but because the sacred writings of enlightened beings from different faiths and fields of life are preserved in it. It cuts across the dividing lines of wealth and poverty, education and lack of education and Muslims & Hindus. It goes beyond our concept of what is holy and embodies an essence of the Truly Holy. It speaks to the heart and the soul, not to the mind. It is not a history, nor a collection of parables. It brings together weavers, butchers, tanners and cobblers in the bosom of the Divine—the flow of the sound current of ecstatic union with the One.

Four hundred years ago, when Guru Arjan Dev ji with the assistance of Bhai Gurdas compiled the *Granth*, which was the predecessor to the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, he included the writings of mystics from many different spiritual paths. Because of this, it may be easy to say the *Granth* and the subsequent *Sri*

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Guru Granth Sahib is an "interfaith"-living reality of Peace. But perhaps it would be better to call it a "Supra-faith"-living guru to spread peace and humanity.

"Supra-faith" means that the text transcends the boundaries of faith-just as Guru Nanak transcended the boundaries of his day, just as his successors transcended boundaries by building prosperous cities for all people. "Interfaith" implies that we are separate faiths coming together to understand and know one another. But "supra-faith" makes us blind to faith to begin with. It doesn't matter what color the rose-the beauty and the fragrance is enjoyed no matter what. And it is in this spirit that Guru Arjan Dev created and Guru Gobind Singh canonized the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Guru Nanak recognized the Guru as Sabad as Word. The teacher which calls us to the truth of our soul doesn't belong to any one path or religion. Rather, it is a technology of Sound. The Word awakens us. The power which awakens the soul is simply the power of True Language, of Sound and that is why, for the Sikh, the Sabad is the Guru. Sikh who understands that the Teacher is the Sabad will recognize the Teacher in every faith, whenever words of Truth are spoken. In this awareness that Sabad-that Sound-is the power ; in the recognition that it is the one who lives by the True words, the Gurmukh, who attains liberation-Guru Nanak created a paradigm of "Supra-faith". He gave us a consciousness to see the Universal Truth in all.

Sabad Guru is the song of cosmos, which permeates the whole existence. In other words, it is resonance of sound, which brings blessing to earth. *Gurbani* can give to an individual, gift of self-realization, which is the ultimate goal of every human being. In each *sutra*, verse of *Gurbani* the secret of unknown is made known. Guru Nanak in his union with God recited Holy Words that an ordinary human can understand and reach to the depth where they enjoy sense of fulfillment and totality. *Gurbani* is divinely oriented as holy word which as a matter of fact is living *Sabad Guru* for anyone aspiring to be liberated.

The Nature of *The Sabad Guru*

"Sabad" means sound, "Guru" means teacher or knowledge that transforms you. The simplest meaning of *Sabad Guru* is a special sound that is a teacher. The root meaning of Sabad is that which cuts the ego. It is a sound that cuts away the ego that occludes the truth from you. Ego is formed by the mind's constant automatic processing. Ego is a chronic malady and in itself lies the cure.¹

The practice of *Jappa* of the *Sabad Guru* changes the frequency of our words. We go from the words of the manmukh-one who speaks with attachment to the mind and intellect, to a Gurmukh-one who speaks from the soul.

As most of the religions agree, from one sound countless waves are born, and these waves are inseparable from the One Sea. It is the ability to hear and feel them that is needed. That capacity comes to a mind that is fearless, neutral, open and awakened. The ten Gurus of the Sikh path heard it perfectly. They put that rhythm and pattern of energy into the poetic compositions of the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Because the reflex points are stimulated by the movements of the tongue, you get the maximum benefit from the pattern of a Sabad by consciously repeating the sounds out loud. That is called *Jappa*-conscious, conscientious recitation. Rotating the tongue over the 84 reflex points in the pattern of the Sabad produces the maximum impact on the gross level of the neuro-endocrine system. As the Sabad gets established in the nervous system and you subconscious, every cell of your body will vibrate the pattern with you. That is called the state of *Ajappa Jap*-of repeating without repeating. It is the result of great devotion, much practice and mastery, or grace. The core technique to precisely vocalize the *Sabad of the Sabad Guru* is useful and true for the most novice beginner and for the most exalted master. The repetition of the *Sutras* of the *Sabad Guru* is a tool as timeless and unconditional as the *Sabad Guru* itself.

The human body is analogous to a musical instrument. It is constructed with 72 strings. Each string or "Sur" acts like a

meridian - it is a flow of the energy of life called *prana*. The inflow of cosmic energy into the body cascades through the crown of the head, the "tenth gate", like a waterfall and collects in seven pools or special vortices. Those pools are called *chakras* or energy centers. The 72 strings are controlled by three central strings or channels. These are called the *ida* and *pingala* the left and right channels to either side of the spine, and the *shushmana*-the central channel up the middle of the spine. The upper centers vibrate with the release of each independent thought. The thoughts of the mind are released at a rate as high as a thousand per blink of an eye. These vibrations or patterns of thought "pluck" those strings. The strings vibrate into 72,000 channels.

The rhythmic *Naad* of the *Sabad Guru* engages and synchronizes the flow of thoughts. This produces an active stillness, a *shuniya*, a zero-point in consciousness.

Another map for the mechanism and impact of the *Sabad Guru* traces the reflexes between tongue and brain. There is a connection between the movement of the tongue in the mouth and the chemistry and neuro-transmitters in the brain. One end of this connection is an array of 84 reflex points on the upper palate of the roof of the mouth. The palate has two parts : hard and soft. The hard palate is located directly behind the teeth; the soft palate is located on the roof of the mouth. 64 points (32 pairs) are located along a "U" on the hard palate near the base of each tooth. 20 more points are in "U" on the roof of the mouth. The exact location varies in each person to conform to the unique shapes of the mouth.

The movement of each part of the tongue stimulates these meridian points. The hypothalamus lies just below the thalamus in the midline of the brain. It is connected by blood vessels to the pituitary gland-the master gland of the body. The hypothalamus is known to regulate vital functions like hunger, drinking, body temperature and sleep. It also triggers the regulation of moods, emotional behaviour and sexuality.

The special patterns of the *Sabad Guru* stimulate the hypothalamus to change the chemistry of the brain.

It allows self-reorganization. A Sabad is a template of information that directs the structuring of information itself. It builds the mental DNA to direct the flow and character of the mind.

Words as established by the scientists are the perfect neuro-stimulators to activate and connect many areas of the brain. The Sabad of Guru capture the patterns of sound and energy in templates of consciousness. The patterns of the *Sabad Guru* use this quantum or atomic level of language and the corresponding structures imposed on our brains by the universal grammar that underlies all language. It doesn't matter what your language is. Repeating primal sounds vibrates the base of language itself.

The Sabad are a treasure chest that records a perfect sample of patterns of wholeness and healing. They form a well-tested legacy for our use :

ਜਿਤੜੇ ਫਲ ਮਨਿ ਬਾਛੀਅਹਿ ਤਿਤੜੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪਾਸਿ ॥²

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the collection of very pure and divine Sabads. Word is a potent and we seek it when we want. So the divinity flows from the sound of each Sabad-it is the heritage of all humanity.

Human children learn about 10,000 words by age five. All things begin in the word. The universe and our awareness is based in word. Using words does something to the brain that opens ancient capabilities and braces us to be fully and uniquely present.

Each stroke of the breath, and stimulation of the 84 points by the tongue is a beat of the baton that releases waves of neuro-chemical messages to activate the pituitary gland which commands all the other glands. That regulates the level of our immune function, the quality of our emotions and the flexibility and effectiveness of our actions.

When we learn to regulate our self with the *Sabad Guru*

and the regulation of the life breath, we take charge of the fundamental linkage of mind and body. This is the power of *Sabad Guru*! It breaks the neuro-respiratory code that commands the glands that change the chemistry that coordinates your energy, perception and state of vitality. It uses sound, breath and rhythm to command the mind-brain-emotion-body-action loop.

The *Sabad Guru* is one of the best tools for mind-body-breath link. It also leaves you more confident. Not just hopeful. Confident that you can create great changes in your self, from top to bottom, from cell to brain, and from feelings to consciousness.

All this is to tell you there are two powerful tools at your disposal : words and rhythm. A simple, conscious use to these has profound effects. Words and sounds are psychoactive events that are rooted in the body and give roots to the sense of self. Rhythm increases our sense of balance, of control of our movements and of general well being. This is the great gift of *Gurbani* for whole of Humanity and everlasting peace.

When humans do not have some sense of their own immortality-they act in ways that are less than animal and create pain the suffering for themselves and others :

ਬਿਨ ਸਬਦੈ ਜਗਿ ਬਉਰਾਨੰ ॥³

And Bhai Gurdas says :

ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸੁਨਿ ਸਮਝਿ ਬੋਲੈ ਬਿਬੇਕੀ

ਨਾਤੁਰ ਪਸੂ ਪਰੇਤਹੁ ਮਹਿ ਏਕ ਹੈ ॥

Every religion sees the waste of life in one who is not living in relationship with God's identity. That is why religions began-so the human could create a connection to the infinite play of which he is a tiny, little part.

As per *Gurbani* what we see is not a philosophy or faith, it is a Universal Truth that everyone can feel connected to. When the word of Guru is heard and listened to-the naturally best in the human being prevails :

ਇਹ ਬਾਣੀ ਜੋ ਜੀਅਹੁ ਜਾਣੈ

ਤਿਸੁ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਰਵੈ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਾ ॥⁴

This is true whether one listens to the word of Abraham, of Buddha, of Jesus, of Mohammad. When the Word of Divinity is not listened to, then the human follows his own desires, his own will. And in that-misery comes :

ਸੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਖਾ ਬੰਧੁ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਜਿ ਗੁਰਿ ਕੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵੈ ॥

ਆਪਣੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਜੋ ਚਲੈ ਭਾਈ ਵਿਛੜਿ ਚੋਟਾ ਖਾਵੈ ॥⁵

This is recognized in almost every religion. The technology of religion is : listen to the Word of the Divine and live in you highest consciousness.

Almost all religions recognize that the ego of the human creates misery and suffering. It is a practical reality. When we are in our "I"-we fail to see the hand of God in our lives. We are unaware that our lives are a gift. That the sun and rain which create the food is beyond the power of our "I" and is simply a gift. That the trees, which give us, shade and moon which guides the tides are Far beyond the power of our "I" and are simply a gift. Being the slave of the Creator, forever subject to the creator's command is not a philosophy. It is a statement of act. No person can determine when his heart will begin beating or when it will end. We are always subject to the Law of Creation, Hukam, which is beyond the power of our intellect to define or control. The spiritually awakened person has made peace with this universal and fundamental Truth.

Another Universal truth and practical reality that *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* points to is the power of Love and devotion. Love is not a philosophy. Love is not a thought. Love is a Power, so strong, that it gives us the strength to sacrifice for one another. What causes us to move beyond the "I" is Love. Love gives us the power to do something for others even if it is difficult. And when the finite creators experiences the Love of the infinite creator that is the power that inspires him to *Surrender* to the *Hukam*, to the command, in the conscious awareness of his total dependency on that great Giver. Where

there is Love, there is GOD. And when we have Love for each other no matter what our faith or background experience GOD together. Love is universal. Love is practical. And when we Love-we are no longer separated by anything. Boundaries of faith no longer matter.

Because the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is not history of philosophy. It is a living Guru, It has songs written by saints in the ecstasy of their consciousness when they were aware of their connection to the Divine and experienced God within themselves as *Gurbani* says :

ਜਬ ਹਮ ਹੋਤੇ ਤਬ ਤੂ ਨਾਹੀ
ਅਬ ਤੂਹੀ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥⁶

References

1. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 466.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 635.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 797.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 601.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 657.

Peace : The Sikh Perspective

Kuldeep Singh*

Commenting on the recently fought war in Iraq, a well known senior Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, USA said the following words on September 22, 2003:

“Winning the war has proved, by comparison, a far easier task than winning the peace. We had the weapons to win the war, but we have not shown the wisdom to win the peace.”

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh Religion was born in the year 1469. He observed that the common people are being exploited by both the rulers of their country as well as the religious leaders. He saw one set of oppressors being replaced by another who were bent upon inflicting untold misery on their subjects. He saw the priests, who were to provide solace and comfort to the followers, discriminating people on the basis of their caste and status. Here is a quote from our Holy Scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib* :

“The age is like a drawn sword and the kings are butchers; the sense of duty and responsibility has taken wings and fled. In this dark night of falsehood, the moon of Truth is not seen anywhere. My search for truth brought me no fruits; in this pitch darkness, I lost my way to peace. The entire world is in miserable condition because of the disease of ego. O Nanak! Salvage them from this disease.”

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 145.

Guru Nanak realized that there could be no real peace without justice. He, therefore, created a blue print for a just

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society. The first thing he asked for was religious tolerance. He declared:

Na koi Hindu na Musalmaan.

(There is neither Hindu nor Muslim)

Which means stop differentiating people between Hindus and Moslems and for that matter between Christian, Sikh or Jew and consider the entire human race as one.

ਤੂੰ ਸਾਡਾ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਬਾਪੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 97.

O Lord, You are the common father of all.

ਸਭੇ ਜੀਅ ਸਮਾਲਿ ਅਪਣੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਕਰੁ ॥

Unn paani much upaeay, dukh dalid door turr

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1251.

O Lord, take care of all (irrespective their faith). Let there be plenty of food for all and let them all be free from pain & suffering.

ਆਪਨ ਬਾਪੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਿਸੀ ਕੋ ਭਾਵਨ ਕੋ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਜਾ ॥

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 658.

No one person can claim a franchise on God.

God Almighty is not interested in our religious labels but in the way, we conduct ourselves. When asked by Kazi and Mulla at Mecca, "who is superior a Hindu or a Muslim?" Guru Nanak replied, "Without good deeds, people belonging to both the religions will have to suffer." Exact words are:

Puchhan khol kitab noon Hindu vadda key Musalmanoi.

Baba aqhay hajiyan, shubh amlaan bajhon dono roi.

Bhai Gurdas

ਜਾਣਹੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਨ ਪੂਛਹੁ ਜਾਤੀ ਆਗੈ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਹੇ ॥

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 349.

Look at the internal characteristics of a person and don't ask any one's caste, status, or race. The caste, race, or status of a person carries no weight in the court of Lord – God.

We are all free to believe what we like, but when we denigrate the beliefs of others in our smaller inter-dependent

world, we invite conflict and threaten peace. In order to maintain peace it is essential to look at other religions and beliefs with tolerance. Sikh religion talks at length on this subject.

Today we need to look beyond the commonly accepted meaning of tolerance. Sikh meaning of tolerance is to defend to the death, if necessary, another's right to belief even if you have no faith in their beliefs. This is precisely what our ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur did. He didn't believe in wearing the saffron mark on the forehead as well as wearing of the Janeo (Hindu Sacred thread) yet he pleaded the case of the Hindus with the Moghul Ruler in Delhi. His plea was ignored, three of his devoted followers were tortured right in front of his eyes and he was put to death in the year 1675 for upholding the rights of the Hindus to practice their religion in the manner of their choice. In the words of our last Guru – Guru Gobind Singh:

He protected their right to wear the sacred thread and saffron mark on their forehead. He did this extraordinary act in this world. He went to such an extreme so that righteousness may flourish. He gave away his head without a sigh on his lips. He considered it to be his duty to do all this. He surrendered his head but not his determination.

He further said,

He left to join God Almighty after breaking into pieces the earthen pot of his body on the head of the Emperor of Delhi. Indeed, no one has done such a heroic act."

His peaceful and non-violent sacrifice shook the foundations of communalism and the Moghul rule ended in India within a quarter of a century of his martyrdom.

Sikh Gurus taught us to fight for the rights of Humanity peacefully but firmly, a unique way that was unheard of in those days. They erected the monument of Sikh Religion on such strong foundations. Their campaign to create a just and tolerant society is never liked by the rulers of the time. Sikhs

were persecuted by the Moghuls. The British did not spare them and the present rulers of India are no exception to the rule.

The non-violent movement against the colonial British rule was initiated as early as 1869 by a great Sikh - Baba Ram Singh, when the Indian National Congress had not yet been born. 64 of the Sikhs who were closely associated with Baba Ram Singh in this peaceful freedom movement were blown up with machine guns in 1872 and Baba Ram Singh, along with 12 of his associates was exiled to Burma.

Another example of such a struggle was when the Sikhs wanted to free their Gurdwaras (Sikh places of Worship) from the hands of hereditary incumbents, who were selfish and corrupt. In 1922, they took a solemn vow at the Akal Takhat Sahib, Amritsar (The highest seat of Sikh authority) to launch an agitation on September 12, 1922 at Guru Ka Bagh in order to secure control of their Gurdwaras. They promised to remain peaceful and non-violent under all circumstances. This incidence happened years before Mr. Mohan Dass Karam Chand Gandhi started his non-violent movement for the freedom of India. Reverend C.F. Andrews, an Anglican priest, who witnessed this peaceful agitation, describes it as "A new lesson in moral warfare has been taught to the world by the followers of Guru Nanak." He gives the following eyewitness account of the police brutality of beating the Sikhs, who participated in the agitation:

"I turned to the corner of a building and reached a spot where I could see the beating itself. There was not a cry raised from the spectators but the lips of very many of them were moving in prayer. I can only describe the silence, the worship, and the pain upon the faces of these people, who were seated in prayer, as reminding me of the shadow of the Cross. What was happening to them was truly, in some dim way, a crucifixion. The Akalis were undergoing their baptism of fire, and they cried to God for help out of the depth

of their agony of spirit.”

He further states:

“It looked the most cowardly blow as I saw it struck and I had the greatest difficulty keeping myself under control. It was a strangely new experience to these men, to receive blows dealt against them with such of the force as to fell them to the ground, and yet never to utter a word or strike a blow in return. The vow they had made to God was kept to the letter. I saw no act, no look of defiance. It was a true martyrdom for them as they went forward, a true act of faith, a true deed of devotion to God. They remembered their Gurus how they had suffered, and they rejoiced to add their own sufferings to the treasure of their wonderful faith. The onlookers too, who were Sikhs, were praying with them and praying for them, and the inspiration of their noble religion, with its joy in suffering innocently borne, could alone keep them from rushing forward to retaliate for the wrong which they felt was being done.”

He was so moved by the incidence that he argued with the then Governor of Punjab and told him that he had seen “with his own eyes hundreds of Christs being crucified at Guru ka Bagh.”

Let me share with you another incidence, where Sikhs struggled against injustice yet remained peaceful. On March 4, 1930, 2500 Indian National Congress volunteers along with 22 male and 6 female Sikhs organized a reception for the leader of Indian National Congress – Mr. Moti Lal Nehru. The function was banned and the people were ordered to disperse by the British colonial government. As soon as the police started beating the crowd, all the volunteers ran away except the 28 Sikhs, who peacefully stood there to face the worst kind of beating that one can imagine. This was witnessed by a reporter of the Evening Times of New York, which carried the eye-witness account in the July 23, 1930

issue of their paper :

There is a clan in India with growing hair on the heads like woman and beards on their faces like Padris. In Bombay, they would drop while receiving blows of police lathis (staff) and would rise again and again to take more blows without any protest. It is strange that each one of them carried a three feet long sword but would never think of using it.

I have talked about achieving our rights by peaceful means and that peace should be based on justice. We must first make a sincere effort to find out the circumstances that provoked or lead people to resort to use violent means to achieve their goals, before using any force against them. What do we do about those who are bent upon treading the path of tyranny and oppression in spite of our repeated peaceful and non-violent way to solve the problems? The answer to this question lies in the following lines.

A Sikh bears in mind these words of the Guru that he/she should not threaten others nor accepts any one's threats. These are the words that are written in our scripture :

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ ॥

O Nanak, consider that person as spiritually wise, who does not threaten anybody nor get threatened by any one.

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1427.

I am not afraid of anybody nor do I make any one afraid of me.

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 327.

After the two world wars that ended in 1945, the world decided to form the United Nations – an institution to make and maintain peace in the world. Let me quote these beautiful lines from the Preamble to the Declaration of Human Rights that was passed on December 10, 1948 by the United Nations:

Whereas it is essential that if man is not compelled as a last recourse to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights be protected by the rule of law.

These words are almost an exact echo of the following words written in *Zafarnama* - the letter addressed to the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb about 300 years ago by the last Sikh Guru - Guru Gobind Singh:

*Choonkaar uz hama heel tey dar gushashat,
Halal ust burdung bshamsheer dast.*

Which means: When all peaceful means of overcoming injustice are exhausted, it is perfectly all right to pick up the sword in your hand.

*Chi Kasmey Kuran mun kunum aitbar,
vagarna toon goi mun ein reh chikaar.*

Which means: I trusted you because you took an oath on Koran, that you will never attack me. I am a peace loving man and would never like to fight. My only alternative is to defend myself in the battlefield.

From the points I made in my presentation the following conclusion may be drawn:

It is our moral and religious duty to defend ourselves in case of an attack, but only after we have exhausted all other peaceful means as peace without justice is no peace at all. During the Guru period in Sikh history, two of our Gurus had to go to war, when the situation left them with no other alternative. They demonstrated the truth that the sword is not for aggression but for the defense of the tortured subjects, in order to bring peace to the land.

***Guru Granth Sahib*, Religious Tolerance and Universal Brotherhood**

Bhagwant Singh Dalawari*

Guru Granth Sahib is the embodiment of Love in its divine purity and I often say that Sikh is the Ambassador of Love to the entire Humanity and his letters of credence are manifested in the directions of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Our Scripture which I consider the Scripture of all religions does not provide any ground for intellectual gymnastics and its appeal is directly to the heart. Self-annihilating love provides the basic of our comprehension of its message. Love that oozes from every word erases doubts of any individual who tastes the divine *Nam Ras*.

Since intellectual parading of *Gurbani* and its commercial singing or reading do not contribute to our life-giving *Amrit*, personal living in accordance with Guru's Word leads us to the Bliss promised therein. In fact that bliss is automatically transmitted to those who associate with the one who lives *Gurbani*. For such a person religious tolerance and universal brotherhood are no slogans but a perennial personal experience. Two significant quotes from *Guru Granth Sahib* will signify the truth of my submission.

Since *Guru Granth Sahib* makes no distinction between the saints and bhaktas included in the scripture on the one hand and six Sikh Gurus on the other, every word therein is our Guru. The quotes I mention are from Kabir and Guru Arjan Dev.

*Tapovan, Amravati, Maharashtra-444602

Kabir :

*Aval Allah Noor Upaya Kudrat Ke Sab Bande
Ek Noor Te Sab Jag Upjaya Kaun Bhale Ko Mande*
(The Lord's light gave life to all human beings; how can, then, one say who is good and who is bad ?)

Guru Arjan :

*Koi Bole Raam Raam Koi Khudae
Koi Seve Gusain Koi Allahe*

(Some people call Him Ram, some God, some others Gusaian and yet others call Him Allah. He is the same Gracious Lord of all. Some go on pilgrimage to Hindu centres others go to Mecca; some do *Pooja*, others offer *Namaz*, some read Vedas; others Koran; some wear white, other's blue; Some wish to go to *Swarg*, others *Bahist*, both words indicate Heaven); some call themselves Hindu, others Muslim. But, says Nanak, only the ones who recognise the Will of the Lord, can know the secret of God).

Since I have learnt, at a personal level, the totality of oneness of all Mankind from *Guru Granth Sahib*, I have seen the universal brotherhood at close quarters. Let me explain :

1. When I was posted in Paris, I used to serve French old people in their homes on week-ends. An old lady, Madame Coiral, 94, told me that I was a better Christian than others. I told her : 'Mother, I am not Christian, but I love Jesus'. She lovingly began reciting Nanak, Nanak in her French pronunciation of Nanak, when I told her of my Guru. But, since I used to tell her on every visit to think of Jesus all the time so that she would not be lonely, she said : "But, in any case, you have restored my faith in Jesus."
2. In Paris again, a Pakistani young Muslim doctor met me in the Metro. When I asked him whether he was regular in *Namaz* and whether he intended to go back to Pakistan

to serve his people, he was stunned but recovered to say, when I got down : "Sahib, I shall never forget that a non-Muslim in a non-Muslim country reminded me about my religion. Thank you, *Khuda Hafiz*."

I think the principal message of *Guru Granth Sahib* is to share the love of God with all and to retain engaged in *Naam Japo Avra Naam Japavo* (*Sukhmani Sahib*) in their own system.

3. Since 1979, after seeking voluntary retirement. I live in *Tapovan*, engaged in the service of leprosy patients as their family member. No one is a Sikh or a Punjabi but they are my kith and kin, although most of them are Maharashtra Hindus, some Muslims, and a rare Christian.
4. Tamilians, Andhras, Sindhis, Punjabis, Sikhs and Hindus, some times Christians, are my prayer companions. We regularly perform Kirtan - a group of Tamilian blind girl, a Punjabi Hindu girl and their Sikh father.

Therefore, my concept of universality of *Guru Granth Sahib* or religious tolerance is not based only on the understanding of Guru's message but on my efforts to live it to receive the bliss it offers and share it with all without discrimination of any kind. A Christian calls himself my son for the last 5 years.

Intellectuals like to refer to the certificates from Toynbee, Pearl Buck and others, while some critics point out the way Tagore and Gandhi understood Sikhism. But a Sikh personally knows that the same spirit of preservation of Truth and defiance of tyranny which lived in Guru Nanak dominated the thinking of Guru Gobind Singh. *Khalsa* of Guru Gobind Singh is the *Sachiara* of Guru Nanak. But the proof of the pudding is in eating it. Despite the *Zulum* of Muslim rulers and despite the horrendous ways in which our two Gurus and innumerable Sikhs were martyred, the path of Truth and righteousness was

never forsaken. And to preserve this righteousness, even Guru Gobind Singh had Muslims fighting on his side.

Hazrat Mian Mir laid the foundation stone of our most sacred shrine ; Muslim and Hindu saints like Baba Farid, Naamdev, Kabir, Ravidas are included in our Scripture. Guru Tegh Bahadur lays down his life for Hindu symbols. Where would you find the teaching of universal love, universal oneness, universal faith and universal prayer so indelibly impressed in any sacred Text other than *Guru Granth Sahib* ? Where would you find in the religious text of one religion, the sacred divine messages of saints of other religions ? Where would you find the prophets of other religions being given the same recognition as its own, except in the perpetual Guru of the Sikhs, *Guru Granth Sahib* ? And it was Guru Gobind Singh who declared *Guru Granth Sahib* as our perpetual Guru in 1708.

It is unfortunate that we have failed to live and spread the message of our Gurus. As we are aware, our actions speak louder than words. No conference, no publicity, no newspapers and no magazines can transmit the religious tolerance, the universal brotherhood unless we show all these qualities in our lives.

Guru Gobind Singh is stated to have cut the skin of a loin over a donkey in Anandpur Sahib and told his followers that we have a lion in Anandpur Sahib, let us destroy it. All the Sikhs follow him and the donkey covered with the lion skin runs ahead. Just when it sees another donkey, it begins to bray. And the Sikhs laugh, but Guru has a message and warns them :

*Jab Lag Khalsa Rahe Niara
Tab Lag Tej Dion Main Sara
Jab Eh Gahe Biprin Ki Reet,
Mein Na Karun Inki Parteet.*

(So long as the Khalsa remains distinctly different from the common folk, I shall lend all my strength but when it follows the traditional rituals without inner purity, I shall not stand by them).

Another story of Guru Gobind Singh : A huge cauldron of rice is prepared and ordered to be thrown on the ground. All the dogs are invited to eat and enjoy. But the dogs attack each other, quarrel among themselves and sully the entire heap of rice. Again, Guru has a message. If the Sikhs will quarrel among themselves, they will spoil everything, destroy each other but will not gain anything.

Guru Granth Sahib's concept of universal brotherhood is so strong that if we had lived it with religious tolerance and adhered to *Manas Ki Jaat Sabhe Eke Pehchanbo*, we would have spread the love of God through our love on the basis of our Guru's commands. I often tell the audiences : Give personal example and become what you want others to become. *Guru Granth Sahib* is of course great and universal but we cannot sit on our past laurels by quoting our Gurus. *Pidram Sultan Bood* (My father was a King) would not work. Let us live the LOVE bestowed on us by our Masters and always remember ?

Att Sunder Kuleen, Chatur

Mukh Gyani Dhanwant

Mirtak Kahiye Nanaka Je

Preet Nahin Bhagwant.

(One may be the most beautiful, may belong to the most respectable family, may be the cleverest person, may be very knowledgeable and may be the wealthiest person, (If he has no love of the Lord, He is a dead body).²

And we can spread the love of the Lord, only if we have developed it ourselves.

References

1. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1349.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

"Bare, ruined Choirs" - Reflection III

N.Q. King*

Reflection I on the Sikh Holy Places in Pakistan was written and sent to one of those newly proposed academic Sikh Journal which never see the light of day. Reflection II appeared as one of the addresses in the Guru Nanak Dev University Foundation Day of 24 Nov. 2003. This third Reflection tries to point out some of the effects of *waqaf* (the government department in an Islamic Republic responsible for religious property) and the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. It also takes up the question as to something of the meaning of such terms as "Holy Land", "Sacred Place" and something of the matter of religious minorities in Muslim lands.

At the recent November *Yatra* of pilgrims from India and overseas, mainly North America and United Kingdom, the Punjab and Pakistan Tourist Development Corporations had on their display a Brochure entitled "Sikh Gurdwaras in Pakistan Past and Present State." No author, place or date is given but internal evidence would indicate it is by officials of the PSGPC and *waqaf* and is dateable to the last year or two. The old Sikh principle that money donated in a certain place be spent in that place is reiterated. We are told something of what has been done. There are colour pictures of magnificent batteries of new toilet facilities. We are shown how the stream of effluent which ran across the road of the main entrance to Nankana Sahib has been diverted. The magnificent ruins at Rori Sahib with their wonders of bricks, mortar and wire have

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been bulldozed to give us in place of piles of bricks and a cattle ranch (actually a few tethered mother buffaloes and some goats), spacious lawns with garden chairs and lawn umbrellas and tables. The Gurudwara at the original Kartarpur was still a building in 1947 when the hour struck. The building has been completed. We just hope they had a cameraman and keep exact records.

We can only hope that something can be effectively worked out for a genuine and effective world Sikh think-tank and executive. An Indian Committee set up in the 1920s by an imperial central authority and use-and-wont customs of Indian precedent will not satisfy the highly educated, democratic philanthropically inclined Diaspora Sikhs of our day.

We many turn now to consider how the great religions have fared together in their relations through history, especially, how minorities have fared in Muslim lands. The position was carefully defined in the days of the Prophet, the companions and the great juri-consults of the first three Islamic centuries.

The Jews who had been genocided and holocausted and exiled from their old homelands, had whole tribes and groups in Arabia. One or two of these were wiped out, many were deported to other parts of the Arab world. A number reached Germany before some of the German Tribes. From there they penetrated Eastern-Europe in small numbers, till a number from Spain in the late 15th century joined them. It seems likely whole tribes and a kingdom accepted Judaism in the Upper Danube area.

The Caliph Omar thought of Arabia as a kind of Holy Land from which non-Muslims had to convert or be resettled. Many Jews and Christians were sent to Mesopotamia. In recent times the Saudi government went to some trouble to bulldoze all Christian remains into the sand.

In Muslim lands like Egypt and Portugal and Spain (after its Muslim conquest in the eighth century and till 1498) Jews

and Christians prospered though there were always outbreaks of Roiting and persecution.

The Christians in the Iberian peninsula never stopped fighting and termed their response crusade. St. James of Compostela became a major patron and he as conqueror of unbelievers carried his banners one day as far as Southern Chile, upper California and right round to the Philippines.

The northern peoples such as the Norman, the French, the Germans, the people of Burgundy and North Italy were converted to Christianity. They carried out riots and burning of the Jews at times. It is clear that his Holiness the Pope and other Christians did their best to help the Jews against the rioters' violence.

At one time these peoples started sending expeditions to try to regain the Holy Lands of Jerusalem and Palestine. These so-called Crusades were at their height in the eleventh and twelfth centuries but were fended off.

In the tenth and eleventh century the Normans who were strict upholders of the Christian and Papal cause in France and England and Ireland, in Normandy were in close friendship with the Muslims. It is said that one Norman King was a Christian Northerner through the day but towards evening shed his armour and accoutrements to become an Arab. Certainly the University movement could cross from Al-Azhar and Fustat through Palermo to Naples and the Papal Schools. A similar Muslim-Christian fellowship at Cordoba and Grenada carried the University idea into Christendom and the Sorbone, Oxford etc.

In the fifteenth century the Ottoman Turks who had become Muslim took Constantinople and penetrated to the heart of Europe. Many in the ruling classes and some whole countryside became Muslim.

As the Turks lost whatever had made them victorious, the Russian followers of a Christian Czar began pushing down the Tigris and eastwards into the Muslim lands.

Turning to the world of Hindustan and eastwards, in the

area from the Indus on to Bihar and Chittagong was under strong Buddhist influence while the substructure can be considered a kind of Hindu. Traces of Jainism are to be found throughout. Mohammed bin Kassim's conquest as far as Multan soon reverted as soon as the young hero was recalled. The Chinese victory over an Arab army in Sin-Kiang put a stop to further for some continues to Muslim-Chinese meeting in inner Asia, though Muslim merchants still traded on Chinese terms at Canton.

The reforms of Shankara and Madhvacharya greatly strengthened so-called Hinduism. The persecuting policies of a number of Indian dynasties seems to wipe out many Buddhist and Jaina outposts.

The campaigns of Mahmud of Ghazni started that annual series of invasions with rape and rapine, booty and wife-taking which the hordes of inner Asia perpetrated every year till they were stopped in the eighteenth century by the Sikh *misl*s. One of those raiding gangs led by Babur came to be known as the Mughals. The Sikhs' traditional attitude to Islam is well known to this audience, and will be defined in a number of papers. The Sikh attitude to Christianity in minute detail is being worked out in India, Britain, USA and Canada as well as in other places. What to do about "Westernism" in its religious and non-religious implications has to be defined.

The Sikhs were apparently offered a place in Pakistan. They threw in their lot with India. At one time the Khalistan movement seemed to point to some new possibilities over the Sikh Shrines of Pakistan. But that also was to recede. For centuries the Jews had no homeland. Then late in the nineteenth century some began to think of a return to Zion. The matter of Israel/Palestine has convulsed the world.

Following the Sikh Gurus, their teaching and example is a faith which will when everything else fails and still unrighteous behaviour continues, will resort to arms. Otherwise they will receive blows and insults and will answer with non-cooperation and positive non-violence. As C.F. Andrews said:

"The independence of India was gained by the silence of the Sikhs as they received the blows of the lathis on their backs."

Like the Christians when they had seen sense in the Crusades, they can find means of visiting their holy places, maintaining permanent worship and institutions and serving the people of the land with schools, hospitals and other benevolent institutions.

It is full of blessings that a high level Vatican delegation is here. We can learn much about a corridor from India to Nankana Sahib, Vatican Radio, newspapers, Banking etc. as well as the long and painful detailed negotiation involved.

Understanding the Sikhs through Bani - Some Early Western Ways

Nazer Singh*

Reason for writing this paper is simple. History had been an important way of knowing the Sikhs since the late 18th century. The Sikh Studies were European-nay-British by their conception and their motivation.¹ In this sense these were Western by their origin. The Sikh Studies recognized the significance of the Sikh scripturer as a more direct and authentic source of knowledge about Sikhism. In the 19th century the leading western scholars knew that Sikhism was something more than a polity. Before Trumpp and Macauliffe began as the translators of the *bani* in the *Adi Granth*, Malcolm and Cunningham had used Sikh literature to understand Sikhism. Actually, the British Sikh Studies turned out to be an enterprise in Sikh History and Religion. By the 20th century the Sikh Studies were no longer the exclusive concern of the British. The westernized Indian-scholarship emerged. But History continued to dominate the Studies. The titles such as '*Guru Nanak in History* (1969)² and '*Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*' (1988)³ appeared. The west no longer Europe alone became more active in the area of Sikh Studies. Till date Historiography remains a valid discipline to participate in 'Exploring Sikhism' or in understanding '*Sikhs of the Khalsa*'.⁴

The Sikh prayer (*Ardas*) enjoins upon the Sikhs to turn their thoughts upon the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Equally it reminds them the deeds of Khalsa.⁵ *Ardas* assures man that

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the *Nanak Nam Works* for the good of all.

This article deals with the foundations of Sikh Studies. Out of the five major western writers on the Sikhs in the 19th century, four have been treated. These are John Malcolm, H.H. Wilson, J.D. Cunningham and M.A. Macauliffe. The fifth Trumpp has been left out. Chronologically, Malcolm's work was published in 1810. Macauliffe's came out in 1909. Between the two stood H.H. Wilson (1848) J.D. Cunningham (1849). The century (1810-1909) went a long way to discover Sikhism for the world. Cunningham and Macauliffe left a durable mark upon Sikh Historiography. Trumpp could not. Malcolm became important for he was its real founder.

Cunningham was to be "a source of inspiration for quite a few Indian historians during the twentieth century."⁶ This is Professor J.S. Grewal's confession. W.H. Mcleod finds it difficult to penetrate the hold of Macauliffe's work over the modern Sikh mind. He writes :

No other work has so effectively instructed western readers about Sikhism with the result that the Tat Khalsa interpretation of the Sikh faith and community has been firmly fixed in the western understanding.⁷

The west believes, says Mcleod, that Sikhism is a unique religion and its true expression is the Khalsa.⁸ Try to add a qualifier to these positions and you will be found in 'opposition' to the Sikhs, warns the historian.

Who were the Sikhs ? This question motivated the British authorities in the late 18th century to gather 'information' about the Singhs or the military strength and other features of Sikh polity. With this originated the Sikh Studies.⁹ The undertaking was not so friendly to the Sikhs. In the name of 'independence', it promoted isolation of both the Sikhs and the Punjab from the rest of Hindustan.

What was Sikhism ? The Sikh Studies asked this question when the Sikhs were to be administered with European civilization and Christianity by the 19th century. The question widened the scope of Sikh Studies both methodologically and

philosophically by admitting Sikh literature including the *bani*. But it raised the issue of Hindu-Sikh relations.¹⁰

Who is a Sikh ?¹¹ This is a question for the Sikhs both in the East and the West since the last quarter of the 20th century. The issue of identity is no longer a matter of debate as it was upto the end of 19th century-but has become a contest. At one level, this is a contest for the defence of '*panth di Azad Hasti*'.¹² At another level, 'the others' are contesting the authority and right of the Panth to (mis) appropriate to itself the Sikh heritage.

There was a basic methodological and ideological difference between the early western writings on the Hindus and the Sikhs. While modern Hinduism was discovered from the classical literature, modern Sikhism was found through the political state of Khalsa.¹² Unlike the case of the early Hindus, the British concern with the Sikhs was not a question of civilization or religio-intellectual evolution of man. It was a concern that was military, diplomatic and political. The 18th century European writers on the Sikhs viz. A.L.H. Polier, George Thomas, Major James Browne and George Forster were literally the agents of the Company. The only exception was Charles Wilkins. But even he failed to arouse the British interest in Sikhism either as a religious or literary tradition. It was in spite of his positive note on 'The Sikh College' and the Books therein at Patna in 1781. Works of Browne and Forster were published in 1789 and 1798, respectively.¹³

The expansion of the Empire upto Delhi politically and upto the Indus diplomatically under Lord Wellesley (1798-1805) and more so the Anglo-Sikh treaties of January 1806 and April 1809 made John Malcolm and Charles Metcalfe interested in the Sikhs.

Consciously, Malcolm expanded the scope of British information agencies into Sikh Studies by including Sikh literature and Punjabi authors. He based his *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1810) on the *Adi Granth* and the *Dassam Granth* as well as on the works of Bhai Gurdass and Mani Singh. He was helped by Leydon, the orientalist. More significant than individuals was

the backing of Calcutta that Malcolm enjoyed. This backing was crucial because Calcutta had already a good collection of Punjabi/Sikh manuscripts made by Forster, William Carrey and Colebrook-the preserver of an early/orthodox *Janamsakhi*.

Sketch of the Sikhs was an exhaustive report on the Sikhs and Sikhism as a religion and polity. Again Malcolm consciously preferred *bani* to show the teachings of the Gurus. In fact, he wanted to show as to how these were actually/originally. He was struck by the fact that Guru Nanak was able to criticize the Hindu and Muslim religious malpractices without creating any big opposition to his own reformation or contributing in any way to the existing hostility between the two communities. For Malcolm, the *bani* and method of Nanak promoted Hindu-Muslim unity by presenting God as the common source of Hinduism and Islam. Further, Guru Nanak led both Hindus and Muslims to return to a common worship. Malcolm concluded that Guru Nanak had promised devotion to God and peace to man. It was Malcom's conviction that History could, as an educational tool, help in reconciling the Nations.¹⁴

Impressed by the method and results of Guru Nanak's teachings, Malcolm proposed that a biography of Guru Nanak be compiled on the basis of his *bani* to judge the Sikh movement as a whole. Till it was accomplished judgement on this account be postponed, he advised. To be brief, Malcolm, made Guru Nanak and Sikh scripture relevant for reformation in British India by showing how caste and the practice like *kudi-mar* (infanticide) were contrary to the *Rahit* or injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh.¹⁵

Notwithstanding his failure to see an originality of Sikh creed or philosophy, H.H. Wilson¹⁶ treated Guru Nanak as one of the many Bhagti and Sufi reformers. These reformers, he wrote, fashioned a simple faith and worship in which the high and low castes along with the Muslims could "cordially combine", and did learn as to how to "lay aside their uncharitable feelings towards each other". The literature these reformers produced, continued Wilson, was influential with the agricultural

population in north India.

Neither Sikh theology nor polity recommended itself to Professor's imagination. Wilson said even the anti-caste instance didn't pay in ethical terms. He found the Sikhs highly *demoralized*. He traced this condition to the worship of 'the Book and the Sword'. The Sikhs were just Hindus because even 'the pure Sikh faith' acknowledged the whole scheme of Hindu mythology. For Wilson Udasis and Nirmalas were the only true Sikhs. The little *bani* used by him were a couple of hymns he had heard at Banaras.

Professor Wilson's interpretation was rejected by Cunningham. The rejection was complete. First Cunningham made an extensive use of *Gurbani* and other Sikh writings. Secondly, he elaborated on Malcolm's idea that method of Guru Nanak was relevant for the British India. Thirdly, he assigned a primacy to Sikh ideas and institutions in the making of Sikh movement. History of Sikhism continuously reminded Cunningham the rise of Christianity in the medieval England.

Basing himself on *the Gouree Rag and Japji* Cunningham found how Guru Nanak's concept of Divinity was more lofty than 'the circumscribed divinity' painted by Ramanand and Kabir.¹⁷ Nanak's Lord was the one, the sole, the timeless being : the creator, the self-existent, the incomprehensible and the ever lasting." He likened the Deity to Truth-the eternal truth-that was "ultimate idea or cause of all we know or behold." His addressees were equally the Pandit, Mulla, the Darvesh and the Sanayasi who were advised to remember Lord of Lords who had seen the rise and fall of numberless Muhammads, Vishnus and Shivas. Asa showed Cunningham that Guru Nanak treated virtues, charities, heroic deeds and gathered wisdom fruitless without the knowledge of God. The Guru rebuked those 'vain men who saw eternal life in their own act of faith.' Cunningham noted the grace as an element in Nanak's concept of Divinity. Salvation was a matter of grace. *Prabhati (Ragni)* is referred to show that good conduct and good works on man's part did matter to God while conferring grace.

The *Asa Rag*, *Suhi* and *Ramkali* are collectively put to give Nanak's view of life. "Life, he says, is as the shadow of the passing bird, but the soul of man is, as the potter's wheel, ever circling on its pivot." Happy was the one 'who remains bright amidst darkness, unmoved amid decay.' Cunningham did not expect Guru Nanak to speculate upon 'being' or the material world, in the manner of Plato or Vyas.¹⁸ But the Guru looked for a 'resting place'.

Nanak didn't deny Divinity to Muhammad or the Hindu incarnations, but he lamented that sin should prevail despite of them. He didn't assert a special divinity for himself. But different is the case with his followers who regarded him as the successor to the inspired teachers. Guru Nanak had it the image of a teacher "sent to reclaim fallen mortals of all creeds and countries within the limits of his knowledge." Cunningham further focused upon this image by saying :

He rendered his mission applicable to all times and places, yet he declared himself to be but the slave, the humble messenger of the Almighty, making use of universal truth as his sole instrument.¹⁹

Nanak didn't glorify the pious hermit at the cost of a devoted householder. Nor did he participate in the cow-hog controversy. Moreover, he was not a municipal law-giver, in fact his reform was 'religious and moral'. He left 'the social amelioration' and 'political progress' of his followers to the operations of time that meant the care of his successors.

Cunningham refused to accept Wilson's argument that the martial tradition impaired in every way the religious or devotional aspect of Sikhism. Guru Arjun's reforms and Bhai Gurdas's interpretation of the mission of Guru Nanak transformed the idea of 'a gradual fusion of Muhammadans and Hindus' into a common observers of a new and a better creed' into an active principle of, and for, the multitude.²⁰ Guru Nanak was presented as the 'instrument of God for the redemption of the world' as well as the symbol of 'every hope and feeling of the Indian races'²¹. The active faith got an other

impulse under Guru Hargobind. It went a long way to separate them from 'all Hindu sects'. After him, the Sikhs "Were in little danger of relapsing into the limited merit or utility of monks and mendicants". Guru Teg Bahadur "by his own example powerfully aided in making the disciples of Nanak a martial as well as a devotional people"²². An 'authentic composition' the *Vachitar Natak*, talked of the ancient royal background as well as the piety of parents of the 10th Guru.

Cunningham used the *Vachitar Natak*, *Hazara Sabad*, *Rahitnamas*, and *Gurbilas* to portray Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa. The words *chit na bhaio hamro awan ko* reminded him Milton's *Paradise Lost*.²³ ('Account me man, I for his sake will leave thy bassom'). In short, the task of social freedom and political progress of the faithful was fulfilled by Guru Gobind Singh who 'bestowed upon them a distinct political existence, and inspired them with the desire of being socially free and nationally independent'. For Cunningham, the Sikh faith got itself established through the Khalsa as a prevailing sentiment and guiding principle "to work its way in the world".²⁴ How Would this active faith interact with 'the civilization and Christianity of Europe'. Cunningham was not sure, he was rather worrisome on this account. He expected the British to be careful while dealing with the Sikhs. For this, he recorded the predominance of the war-like Singhs in the Punjab and their spread "as soldiers from Kabul to the South of India". It was meant to underline the significance of Sikh tradition for the new rulers.

The greatest western scholar the British Punjab was able to produce was M.A. Macauliffe.²⁵ For fifteen years he worked on Sikhism, "an unknown religion" to introduce it to the world in the 20th century. Trumpp's failure to do the same was the immediate cause for Macauliffe's undertaking. But it would not be correct to reduce the context of Macauliffe's writings either to Trumpp's failure or the ideological needs and preferences of the Singh Sabha movement. Cunningham had entertained doubts about the capacity of 'the more learned'

(indirectly the orientalist like H.H. Wilson and the western observers and the British policy makers) to understand Sikh faith and people properly. Macauliffe registered this failure.²⁶ He desired to understand the Sikhs afresh for he had realized that the Sikh people 'were not understood by their rulers' (McLeod, 2000). It pained him to note that Sikhism was being treated as 'a heathen religion'. Further, the spiritual happiness and loyalty of its professors was seen as a negligible item.²⁷ He set to identify the merits of Sikhism for both the Empire and human civilization.

The list of 'religious and moral' merits of Sikhism as made by Macauliffe was fairly long.²⁸ Sikhism put prohibition on idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, discrimination against women, use of the intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to the sacred rivers and tanks of Hindus. Positively it inculcated loyalty, gratitude for the favour received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality and other virtues 'known to the honest citizen of any country'. For Macauliffe, to take Sikhs as Hindus was to act in opposition to the teachings of the Gurus.

Curiously Macauliffe noticed that 'the greatest religious reformers' of the world had not come from the ranks of clergy but from the laity.²⁹ These included Pythagoras, Isaiah, Moses, Socrates, Buddha, Christ, 'Muhammad of Makka, Kabir and Nanak. Macauliffe said 'divine emotionalism' was given the loftiest heights by Guru Nanak. Also the Guru exalted his mental vision to an ethical ideal beyond the conception of Hindu or Muhammadan.³⁰ Nor was this ideal affected in any way 'by Semitic and Christian influence'. The originality of Sikhism was in its 'more comprehensive ethical system'.

To sum up, the European writers laid down the foundations of Modern Sikh Historiography. The British Sikh Studies beginning with John Malcolm constituted the earlier phase of this historiographical tradition. The tradition gave due importance to Sikh literature especially the Sikh Scripture and chronicles. The 'friendly' diplomatic and political Anglo-Sikh relations objectively helped Malcolm to present Guru Nanak

as a great reformer. Guru Nanak's life and message were found relevant and useful. Devotion to God and peace to man were the essentials of the Guru's mission, recorded Malcolm. This interpretation was in line with his conviction that historical knowledge could reconcillitate the nations and races. Logically, Guru Nanak was projected as a promoter of Hindu Muslim unity.

Inspite of his concern for the civil ideas and institutions of the Sikhs, H.H. Wilson failed to see the originality of Guru Nanak's mission or the uniqueness of his method and teachings. Failure was caused by his inability to see the Sikhs through their scripture. Khalsa did not appeal to Professor Wilson's imagination. J.D. Cunningham was right in observing that the too much learned of the west were likely to misread Sikhism.

Cunningham made an extensive use of *Bani* and other Sikh literature. He developed the idea of Guru Nanak as the great reformer. Moreover he treated Sikh ideas and institutions as the makers of Sikh movement. Cunningham was loud in proclaiming the uniqueness of Sikhism-Sikhism was unique not only for Guru Nanak's method of presenting Divinity but also for its social practice culminating into the Khalsa. The Sikhs under Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind and Guru Teg Bhadur were martial and devotional people. Khalsa inherited these qualities. By implication, Cunningham suggested that Khalsa also inherited Guru Nanak as an 'instrument of God for the redemption of the whole world' as well as the symbol of 'every hope and feeling of the Indian races'. Cunningham stood by the unity of Sikh Gurus. He relied on Bhai Gurdass and the *Vachittar Natak* to present Sikhism. It was through Khalsa that the Sikhs established themselves 'to work through the world'. For Cunningham the Sikh polity stood for 'social amelioration and national independence. The Singhs as the bearers of both a living faith and active patriotism were Cunningham's worry. He expected the British as the carriers of European civilization and Christianity to deal with the Singhs carefully.

M.A. Macauliffe started from where Cunningham had left.

He was convinced that Sikhism was in crises. The Sikhs were known to the world only as a military class. Sikhism as a religion was 'practically unknown'. Moreover, it was still being regarded as a heathen religion. The British rulers were the least inclined to see it as a source of Sikh spiritualism and happiness. Macauliffe wanted the rulers to improve their reading of Sikhism. Both empire and civilization couldn't afford the reaps of Sikhism into Hinduism. The historian was sure that the Sikhs weren't Hindus. Teachings of the Guru didn't admit them to be otherwise, he wrote. Likewise, Guru Nanak's ethical ideal had nothing to do with the Semetic and Christian influence. Macauliffe was hopeful that the 'enlightened nations' would not allow Sikhism to perish provided these might be informed of 'the merits of Sikhism'. He choose to act as an ambassador of Sikhism.

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Guru Granth Sahib and Interfaith Dialogue

Gurnam Kaur*

Introduction

Today with the advancement of science and technology the world, in which we are living, has become like a global village. Because of the modern means of communication and transportation different countries of the world have come closer. To communicate with each other has become easier among the various cultural, social and religious groups. According to Ken Wilber :

Most of the 'new paradigm' approaches emphasize that we are living in a global village a planetary network and we need a global systems and map to reflect that global territory.¹

The advancement in technology and the new researches in science have caused the economic advancement along with the social evolution and transformation of human society. None of the countries in the present day world can claim of itself being the center of a particular race, community, culture or religion. In search of bread and employment man has moved and settled down from one corner of the world to the other which has resulted in the spread of different religious communities, social and cultural groups to the different parts of the world and this process is still going on. This has become a very wide spread and common phenomena. The countries like India and Russia already have been the home of multi-cultures, religious-communities, social-groups and different

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languages. In the present times other countries of the world have joined the same process. With this new process the present world is confronted with many burning issues like ecology, self-determination, integration, co-habitation, interaction among various communities etc. The most confronted problem which is being faced by all the world communities is religious co-existence and to communicate with each other. Religion is deeply related with human emotions and feelings of the inner-self of man and any comment upon someone's religion, sometimes, seems an attack on his innerself. Sometimes the progress of one religious group is taken as a danger to another religious group. In such situations, sometimes, it generates an atmosphere of mutual hatred, tension and conflict which reaches at a dangerous point in the form of communal riots and become harmful. These days many minority communities are facing such situations all over the world. So there is the need of inter-cultural communication inter-action and inter-faith dialogue among the social and economic groups. So today it has become problem before the collective wisdom how to ease the tension and to evolve some methods or models for inter-communication without injuring the feelings of others. We are to see, in this paper, how the Sikh Scripture, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the *Sabad Guru* guides us to communicate with each other and come out of such problems which have become so acute in the post modern era.

Revelation in some form or other, is basic to all religions of the world and the sacred scriptures are considered the record of these revelations. According to Sikhism, man can have the direct communion with God through meditation on His *Naam*. The idea of revelation in Sikhism is very unique one. In Sikhism divine manifestation is expressed in the concept of "*Joti*" (light), not in the taking of birth by God as a human being. It is the ascension of the seeker to God, not descent of God. "The Guru does not claim himself to be an

incarnation of God-which theory he severely repudiates-but sometimes he does represent himself to be the spokesman of God. The knowledge contained in the hymns is described to be God given".² The revelation of truth, the insight to the Guru is referred to by the Guru himself. The Guru had the direct experience of truth and then expressed this experience in his own language. The Gurus are the carriers of this revelation and messengers of God. They were commissioned by God to preach and practice the truth. They conveyed to the people whatsoever was revealed to them in their mystic realization by God.³ *Guru Granth Sahib* contains mystic experience of the Gurus. *Bani* is the expression of the Divine Truth realized by them.

Guru Granth Sahib being the sacred and basic scripture of Sikhism is the primary source of its philosophy and religious ideology. The fifth Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606 A.D.) compiled it in 1604 A.D. "At the conclusion of his task, the Guru told his Sikhs that the *Granth Sahib* was the embodiment of Guru and should, therefore, be held in extreme reverence."⁴ The guruship was bestowed on the *Granth* by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh Ji (1666-1708 A.D.) before his departure to the heavenly abode 1708 A.D. Thus *Guru Granth Sahib* is the living embodiment of the Sikh Gurus (*Pargat Guran Ki Deh*) and represents their spirit. According to the Sikh tradition whenever there arise two views about some problem, the decision goes into the favour of one which is more close to and is based on *Guru Granth Sahib*. It is the source of light showing the path leading to the highest goal of spirituality.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Interfaith Dialogue

The complication of *Guru Granth Sahib* itself indicates towards the interfaith dialogue. *Guru Granth Sahib* itself opens the way for interfaith and co-existence as the source of universal concerns and values. It has included the hymns and teachings of six Gurus, the first Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), second Guru Angad Dev (1504-1553), third Guru Amardas

(1476-1574), fourth Guru Ramdas (1534-1581), fifth Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) and ninth Guru Teg Bhadur (1622-1675). Besides the hymns of the Gurus, the hymns of the Hindu Bhagats and Muslim Sufi poets are included in *Guru Granth Sahib* which have the ideological similarities with *Gurmat*. They are Jaidev, Sheikh Farid, Namdev, Trilochan, Permanand, Sadhna, Beni, Ramanand, Dhanna, Pipa, Sain, Kabir and Ravidas. All these Bhagats belonged to different regions of India, different castes and cultures, different languages and to different periods of history. They composed their hymns before the origin of Sikhism and Guru Arjan Dev included them in *Guru Granth Sahib*. The Period covered by them is very long, from Jaidev (1170 A.D.) to Bhagat Kabir (1440-1518 A.D.). Bhikhan, Surdas, Sunder and Mardana were contemporaries of the Gurus. Alongwith them are included the *swayyas* composed by Bhattas who appeared in the court of the Gurus. So *Guru Granth Sahib* covers a long span of five centuries from 1170 A.D. to 1675 A.D. The medium for the compositions of the hymns is poetry and it is composed in *ragas* (rhythm and metre).

When Guru Nanak founded the Sikh religion the general situation in the society was surcharged by hatred among the existent religions, political slavery, caste rivalry and conflict among the different social and religious groups. In such a deteriorated state of affairs Guru Nanak founded a new religion based on the oneness of God and oneness of man. *Guru Granth Sahib* as already mentioned, is the record of Sikh revelation and the *bani* of other Bhagats. The truth realized in the mystic experience of the Gurus is depicted in the form of *bani*. The whole of *Guru Granth Sahib*, its compilation, inclusion of the *bani* of Hindu Bhagats and Muslim Sufis, itself places the *Sabad* model for interfaith dialogue. Not only this, Guru Nanak took four long journeys in the four directions and visited the different religious places of other people and had dialogue with their religious leaders. *Sidh Gosati*, *Oankar* and many other compositions are the examples of such

dialogue. The *Sabad* Model given in *Guru Granth Sahib*, for interfaith dialogue is for the "good to all" not only in theory but in practice too. This model in its realization (revelation) and manifestation (theology) is ever fresh, universal and independent.

The *Sabad* Model depicted in the *bani* of *Guru Granth Sahib* is based on its concept of Reality and the Creation of that Reality i.e. man. The concept of Reality viewed in *Guru Granth Sahib* is considered as One. In *Guru Granth Sahib* the nature of Reality has been portrayed at the very beginning in *Mul-Mantra*, as one universal Being, the Real, the Spirit. He is the Creator, the Controller and Enjoyer, Beyond Restraint, the Spontaneous, beyond any internal antagonism, the Harmonious. He is timeless, the Manifest, yet He does not come into birth and death. He is Self-Existent. Man can atune to Him through Guru's Grace.⁵ It is further told that the Real one was in the beginning, was before the beginning of the ages and is through all the ages. He shall ever be. The Reality which is spiritual in nature is symbolized by One (ੴ), One (ੴ), has been placed before Oankar (ੴ) to stress oneness of God. The whole process of Creation and Contraction takes place under His *hukam* and he is pervasive in His Creation through His *hukam*.⁶ One (Ik) is a *Karta Purakh* (Creator) who creates the universe out of Himself. The whole creation is illumined by His light.⁷ Man being His creation is illumined by His light and comes into this world because of that light.⁸ So God being is source of all creation all humans are illumined by His light and are spiritually one.⁹ Ideal place before human being is to realize his spiritual essence, the source of all creation, the Supreme Reality.¹⁰ Having origination from the same Divine source man can not be divided on the basis of religion, caste, colour, race or sex. All human beings are one and equal. At the same time He is the source of all religions. To realize Him people adopt different paths and follow different scriptures. But He is realized only remembering His Name.¹¹ People

remember Him by different Names as Rama, Khuda, Lord Allah, but He is One the Gracious Lord Almighty, Compassionate. Some go to Hindu holy places, others to Haj, some perform *puja*, others bow their heads in *Namaz*, some study Vedas, others Qur'an, some wear blue, others white. Similarly some are called Hindus, others Muhammadans. But only those can realize Him who realizes His Will. Pride is the most dangerous because many conflicts arise because of religion and man commits all sorts of sins in the name of religion. It is made clear in the *bani* of *Guru Granth Sahib* that the world and all the scriptures are the manifestation of that one God but still He is limitless and beyond all the scriptures, even beyond the descriptions given in these scriptures because He is Transcendent as well as Immanent.¹² He can be realized directly. In the same sense to say that this scripture is true and that is false is wrong and becomes the cause of many religious conflicts, strains and disputes.¹³ The religious leaders are always responsible to lead the people on the way of religion or on the way of mutual religious dialogue or understanding or religious conflicts.

We may conclude that the way for all, the common man and the clergy, suggested in the *bani* of *Guru Granth Sahib* is to ever remember God's Name, to earn one's livelihood with one's own hands through honest means and to share one's earnings with the needy.¹⁴ The idea of living on other's earnings has been rejected in *bani*. If a greedy person becomes even a mendicant he is worthless. For your own greed if you turn your house into a mosque i.e. a religious place, is not a good job.¹⁵ When you ever keep the Name of God in you mind, your chances of staggering are reduced. This is best for the emancipation of all humanity. According to the fifth Guru by meeting the true Preceptor you understand the way of life then while laughing, enjoying, living you attain liberation.¹⁶

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13. ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਹਭਾਹੂੰ ਬਾਹਰਾ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਦਿਸੈ ਜਾਹਰਾ ॥, *Ibid.*, p. 337.
14. ਉਦਮ ਕਰੋਦਿਆਂ ਜੀਉ ਤੂੰ ਕਮਾਂਵਦਿਆਂ ਸੁਖ ਭੁੰਚ ॥
ਧਿਆਇਦਿਆਂ ਤੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਮਿਲੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਉਤਰੀ ਚਿੰਤ ॥, *Ibid.*, p. 522.
15. ਗਿਆਨ ਵਿਹੁਣਾ ਗਾਵੈ ਗੀਤ ॥ ਭੁਖੇ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਘਰੇ ਮਸੀਤਿ ॥, *Ibid.*, p. 1245.
16. ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਭੋਟਾਏ ਪੂਰੀ ਹੋਵੈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ॥
ਹਸੰਦਿਆਂ ਖੇਲੰਦਿਆਂ ਪੈਨੰਦਿਆਂ ਖਾਵੰਦਿਆਂ ਵਿਚੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ॥, *Ibid.*, p. 522.

The Themes of Dialogue and Justice in *Guru Granth Sahib*

N.Muthu Mohan*

The present paper is an attempt to study the themes of Dialogue and Justice, and their intimate interrelation as they are revealed in *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh Scripture. The paper argues that Dialogue and Justice are very fundamental and interwoven themes in *Guru Granth Sahib*. It tries to establish that as much as the Sikh Gurus encountered inter religious and inter community situations in the late medieval India, so much as they committed themselves to dialogue as the effective form of installing just relations among them. In the Sikh Gurus one finds, may be, first of its kind in Indian history, a deep understanding of the multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-communal reality, and consequently, the Gurus strive to meet the situation positively. The paper argues that dialogue and justice are reached in *Guru Granth Sahib* not only at the empirical level but also they are achieved fundamentally in the philosophical level.

Devotional mode of thought of *Guru Granth Sahib*

Let us start with discussing the compositional structure of *Guru Granth Sahib*. By compositional structure we mean not only the editorial distribution of the hymns of *Guru Granth Sahib*, but also the basic spirit inbuilt in the Sikh Scripture. The basic and fundamental spirit of *Guru Granth Sahib* is its devotionalism. *Guru Granth Sahib* contains many hundreds of emotionally charged hymns musicalized by the wonderful hearts of the Sikh Gurus and other Bhagats. *Guru Granth*

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Sahib is not a philosophical treatise. It does not contain a finished project of expounding a philosophical system. It does not try to analyze reality with dry theoretical tools and does not come out with its discoveries. The language of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is not abstract and it does not pretend to prove any particular concept. The emotional nature of the hymns of the *Guru Granth Sahib* makes it more of a consistent, honest, innocent and enduring search for truth.

"Weep with hearts melted in praise of holy truth"

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 420)

"Nanak with the Lord is intoxicated

As the fish to water devoted."

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 455)

"To Nanak is the Lord beloved

As the drop that the Chatrik quests after."

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 455)

"With Him I am involved

As the humble-bee in the lotus.

That in it is absorbed, not for a moment moving aside"

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 455)

"Contemplating Him with each breath find I life."

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 461)

At times one feels that the *Guru Granth* is a cry for truth, an unending quest for an authentic life, an uncompromising thirst for the divine and a painful exploration of how to live truly amongst the falseness and hypocrisy that try to succumb the humans. Although the historical setting of *Guru Granth Sahib* is late medieval or post-medieval, its mode of thinking and search is non-historical. I would prefer to say that the mode of thinking enshrined in the Sikh Scripture is existential. By existential we mean here an open ended addressing of the fundamental problems of living. Without adorning any theoretical or religious presupposition, *Guru Granth Sahib* keeps on asking the questions of human living and its meaning. The Sikh Gurus refuse to place themselves within any sectarian way of thinking or to wear any particular

religious garb. The Sikh hymnal poetry seems to be composed from the limit and boundary situations of humans, when the humans after loosing hope in all human means surrender absolutely before the Divine and just listen to the Divine. Truly it is a state of the lowest of the low, death of all ego and vanity, and a state of spontaneity. It is this openness that informs us that *Guru Granth Sahib* is the scripture of dialogue and Justice.

Historians of Indian Religions and philosophy tell us that chronologically the devotional mode of thinking appeared in the beginning of medieval history after the 'richly' philosophical ancient period. The ancient India is attributed with the orthodox (Vedic) and heterodox (Non-Vedic) philosophical systems. The scholars of culture do not give us a satisfactory answer to the question, why the philosophical mode of thought was so characteristically prominent in ancient India? How much such a construction that the ancient was philosophical and the medieval was devotional is true? Or merely, is it an aping of the modern European construction of ancient versus medieval as (Greek) philosophical versus (Christian) religious?

The existentialist discussions clarify that the emotional is more fundamental, more primal and many times richer than the dry and abstract intellectualism of the philosophical mode of thought. They say that when the emotional articulations of human mind are concrete, the abstract thought is always pale and one-sidedly metaphysical. Nietzsche would say that a philosopher-system builder is dishonest to his initial quest to find out the non-presumptuous truth. On the other hand, the primal passionate search for truth (*Sacch*) is always open ended. It is this mode of thought we find in *Guru Granth Sahib*.

The language and compositional structure of the Upanishads are less systematic in comparison to the Vedantic philosophy made out of them. In Vedanta, particularly in its advaitic form, one finds the abstractly rigorous metaphysical

philosophy of the Brahmans. In Vedanta, Upanishads loose all flexibility and their message is institutionalized in a particular way. To quote a south Indian example, the Saivite devotional hymns of the first Nayanmars (V-VII centuries) collected in *Devaram* are overwhelmingly emotional, existential and open-ended. But when Saivism got institutionalized around the Tenth century, it started producing its philosophical system namely the Saiva Siddhanta. The Siddhanta philosophy is an abstract theoretical system that became rigid in its conceptual structure as well as in its social implications. The uniqueness and greatness of *Guru Granth Sahib* lay in the fact that it has refused to become a theoretical system of philosophy and thus it has insured itself to become a closed system. Generations of Sikh people get inspiration from the primal feelings enshrined in *Guru Granth Sahib* by their Gurus and get involved in the emotionally charged space within the *Guru Granth Sahib*. It cultivates them to an open emotional mode of thinking devoid of any religious or social sectarianism. *Guru Granth Sahib* teaches them to a simple, humane and spontaneous culture. A participatory living with the *Guru Granth Sahib* trains them to a life of dialogue and justice.

Non-colonizing attitude of *Guru Granth Sahib*

Guru Granth Sahib is the wonderful registration of the non-colonizing attitude of the Sikh Gurus to the Other. This could be witnessed at the surface of the *Guru Granth Sahib* as well as at its depths. The surface and the depth do not differ or contradict. What do we mean by colonizing ?

It has to be noted that multiplicity is one of the oldest facts observed in Indian history. It seems that even the earliest philosophical speculations in Indian soil is related with the problem of One and Many. The problem finds its first articulation in the Upanishads on the one hand and in the Jaina philosophy on the other hand. Upanishads offer the *Ekantavada* as the solution and Jainism suggests *Anekantavada* as the solution. *Ekantavada* is the philosophy of Brahman that

recognizes Brahman as the only reality and relegates the multi-reality as *maya* and snare. Brahman finds the definition that it is supreme, the most sacred, one and the only reality. The Brahman as reality and the empirical world as transient-*maya* is the formulation of philosophical monologism on the one hand, and it is the philosophical articulation of social injustice on the other hand. *Anekantavada*, on the other hand, proposes a democratic model where every individual identity (*Naya vada*) finds recognized and peaceful relations (*Ahimsa*) are advocated among the plural entities. The attitude developed by Vedanta towards the multiple-reality is the colonizing one. The Vedanta philosophy asserts the supreme validity of the concept of Brahman as the only ultimate reality and while doing this simultaneously devaluates the temporal reality. The concept of Brahman is constructed by devaluating the temporal, physical, multiple and the female. The conceptual colonization of plurality and temporal by Brahman renders the ideological justification of social colonization. The social relations suggested by *Ekantavada*, thus, culminate in the formation of *varna*-caste structure in Indian history. Colonization of the plurality, monology of Brahman, untouchability between Brahman and the rest are some of the strategies followed by Brahmanism to establish the superiority of *Ekantavada*. *Anekantavada* almost fails in the ancient historical debate and yields before history.

Thus we argue that one finds a non-colonizing attitude of the Sikh Gurus in *Guru Granth Sahib*. The first and glaring fact of *Guru Granth Sahib* is that although so many authors are attributed to the Scripture, the Sikh Gurus exhibit a non-colonial attitude to the Bhagat-saints. Even where there is difference, the songs of the Bhagats are given in full and the Sikh Gurus leave their own songs adjacent to them. Bhagat Kabir, Ravidas, Baba Farid and others find a very reverent place in *Granth Sahib*. Generations of Sikhs are generous to state that they are deeply inspired by the hymns of Kabir, Ravidas, Baba Farid, Ramananda and other saints. So many

religious denominations such as the Jains, Buddhists, Vaishnavites, Saivites, Nath Yogis, Muslims, Sufis etc, find mention in the entire space of *Granth Sahib*. The Gurus refer them as the multiple attempts of comprehending the incomprehensible God. The Gurus offer some justification to each. So many scriptures and holy books such as the Vedas, Quran, Smirities, Sastras etc, are referred in the *Granth Sahib* :

"All claim God to be their own
Show one that does not so claim.
Of his deeds each has to render
the reckoning himself."

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 474)

"The Yogi's creed in seeking enlightenment
is expressed.

The Brahmin's in following the Vedas.

The Kshatriya's creed is heroism;

The Shudra's service of others.

Should one, however, realize this secret,

One creed all should inspire."

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 470)

"In Sati-yuga was the chariot of contentment,

With righteousness as charioteer.

In Treta was the chariot of continence

with might as charioteer.

In Dwaper was the chariot of austerity

with truth as charioteer.

In Kali-yuga is the chariot of the fire of passion,

With falsehood as the charioteer."

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 470)

"Sam-Veda designates the Lord as white-robed,

Who is true and true abides.

All in truth were then absorbed.

Rig-Veda describes the Lord

as pervasive in all creation.

In Yajur-Veda is mentioned the forcible seduction of Chandraval,
And appearance of Krishna of the Yadava race.

X

X

8

In Kali-Yuga appeared Atharva-Veda, when God was given the name of Allah.”

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 471)

The logic of the above discussions is illuminating. The Guru does not repudiate any religious sect or its scripture outright. The Guru is accommodative. He is generous to give some justification to earlier forms of beliefs in those mythological-historical ages :

“Each of the four Vedas has expressed some truth. Those studying and expounding them realize what is appropriate action from what is inappropriate.”

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 471)

It is true that the *Guru Granth Sahib* contains severe criticisms addressed to the hypocrisy and corruption of Brahmins, justification of casteism by the Sastras and the falseness of Brahmanic and other rituals. Such criticisms are part and parcel of the Gurus' commitment to the theme of justice. But this does not mean that the Gurus were intolerant to the religious sects referred. We know that Guru Nanak Dev refused to wear the sacred thread, but the Ninth Guru sacrificed his life for the religious rights of the Kashmiri Brahmins to wear the sacred thread. This may look paradoxical, but in the first case ritualism has been in principle rejected to the Sikhs and in the second one religious rights of a people has been defended from a despotic ruler. Guru Nanak often addresses the Hindus to be truly Hindus and the Muslims to be truly Muslims. Guru Nanak Dev's war was not against any particular belief system, but against its unjust and corrupt practices. Guru Nanak calls every religion to be met at the ethical and socially just plane. In other words, if a particular religion is ethical and just, the Guru would not have any objection to it:

"In former times was seed of truth planted
which obtained respect.
Now is that seed crushed, how may it sprout?
It may sprout were it whole, and the weather suitable.
Saith Nanak: Without the proper chemical
on plain cloth, the dye will not catch."

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 469)

This is the problem of the Gurus. The seed must be whole, the weather suitable and the soil (human mind) should be prepared for cultivation. It is a holistic approach and no question of colonizing the earlier forms of religiosity arises here.

Critique of Monologism

We have already mentioned that monologism of Brahman serves as a source of injustice in Indian history. Brahman as the only reality is closed in itself and it is non-communicative to the other. *Guru Granth Sahib* transcends this monologism. It takes out the ultimate reality from its closed shell and makes it communicate with the other. Monologism of Brahman and the injustices associated with it are overcome by *Guru Granth Sahib* at least by three important ways. 1. By de-centering the metaphysical concept of Being. 2. By de-centering the Self. 3. By de-centering the temporal world.

One of the means of de-centering the metaphysical being of Brahman is to assert the reality of temporal world. Without a deep recognition of the reality of the temporal reality, the temporal problems cannot assume reality and real solutions cannot be sought. If the temporal reality is out rightly declared as illusion, how could the multiple religions be approached as every one having some justification? If temporality is not taken as real, how could one align with the lowest of the low? If temporality is not true, how can a religion convey its social message? Exclaims Guru Ramdas :

"Air, water, earth and sky- all are Lord's abode.
Himself in all these He operates.

What may I call unreal?"

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 143)

"Reville not the world for anything,

By the Lord is it created"

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 611)

Guru Arjun warns :

Bhagat Ravi Das out rightly and irrevocably dismisses the Sankarite dichotomy of Brahman and Maya :

Of the episode of the rope and the serpent

Now the mystery have we realized somewhat.

As by sight of innumerable bangles,

one forgets the gold.

Now I express not that illusion.

In all innumerable forms is the sole Lord pervasive,

Disporting in all.

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 658)

Guru Nanak Dev sees the God and the world as root and branches. The total reality is expressed by Guru Nanak Dev through the metaphor of *Ped* (Tree) :

"Discarding the root'

To the branch are attached".

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 658)

The *Guru Granth Sahib* conception of God is not purely transcendent, but it is equally immanent. The understanding that God is immanent in the world and pervasive in all existence renders a powerful justification to the temporal reality. Guru Nanak undubiously states that " True and holy are Thy continents and universes; True and holy are Thy worlds and the forms created by Thee." And further asserts that " Marvellous are the varied forms of speech in the universe; Marvellous the scripture recorded; Marvellous the multiplicity of creation, wonderful their distinctions; Marvellous creation's forms, wonderful its variety." (*Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. 463-64).

Equally important is how *Guru Granth Sahib* de-centers the self as *haumain* or ego. *Guru Grantha's* main thrust all

along is to deconstruct the ego, to achieve the death of ego so that an enlightened man (Gurmukh) reaches the state of Sahaja or spontaneity. Without going into the details of the present theme, we can state that the Sahaja state is an open ended and devoid of any monology. Elimination of ego as it hails from wealth, status and power is indeed a major step towards justice too.

Finally, *Guru Granth Sahib* de-centers the temporal reality. *Guru Granth Sahib* by no means takes the temporality as for granted. Its severest criticisms are addressed to the falseness and inauthenticity of the temporal world. *Guru Granth Sahib* criticizes the kings who have turned into butchers, the priests who have turned into hypocrites, the elite who cherish their caste status, the Siddhas who are indifferent to temporal problems. *Guru Granth Sahib* believes at transforming such temporal reality into an worthy one. *Guru Granth Sahib* intends to prepare a dedicated collectivity of people to achieve this cause.

Forgiveness : A Choice Beyond

Elizabeth Espersen*

I am not a Sikh, but I am one who has been called to walk with Sikhs. A long time ago I had a dream, which at the time I did not understand...

A knock came at my door; when I answered, a Lion stood there. Initially frightened, I closed the door quickly. Upon reflection, I gingerly cracked it open: the Lion was still there – a valiant, majestic animal. More intrigued than scared, I flung the door wide until I stood face to face with this regal creature, so incongruously at the front door of my suburban home. It looked at me solemnly, then slowly turned and walked away. In a deep, gravelly roar, I distinctly heard the words, "Walk with the Lions!"

Only after many years of wondering who the lions were and how I was to do this, did I understand. While preparing a lecture for an Interfaith Conference at Guru Nanak Dev University in the Indian Punjab, I realized the meaning of my dream. "Singh", from the Sanskrit *siṃha*, which means "lion", is the name given to Sikhs who take Khalsa, the initiatory rite for those who come of age, carrying with it the mandate to strive for moral excellence, spiritual fervor and heroism.¹ Over the years, I have known many who are named "Singh", here in the United States and elsewhere. It has been my privilege to work/walk with these "Lions of God" and to learn from them. Their greatness of spirit has not disappointed me.

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Introduction

The events of September 11, 2001 have changed us. We are different now, no matter who we are or where in the world we live. If we call the United States home, we are more patriotic, more protective of our lifestyle. We cherish our freedoms with greater awareness and question why others hate us enough to kill our innocent people, even our children. If we live elsewhere, we are apprehensive. There is a war afoot and not only in Iraq; it is a war against terrorism that is global in scope. In this war, the enemy is elusive and insidious, capable of using deadly, biochemical weapons against which there is yet no antidote. For all of us, the questions are larger now; and the answers that we find to give life meaning are more precious. Yes, we are different now.

As a Christian involved in the Interfaith Movement and in interreligious dialogue for more than thirty years, I have interacted with great souls in many of the world's religions. Interfaith activity and dialogue give value to the diversity among us, and meaning to the globalization that we undergo in our times. They invite us to move beyond isolation and the ignorance which can lead to fear, into knowledge, mutual respect and friendship. This interfaith exchange is powerful, offering the opportunity for broadened human solidarity and genuine exploration of the One Who is Creator of the universe and all that is in it. We are all, whatever our culture or religion, on this planet together; it is to our advantage to discover, each within our own traditions, how we can live, work and be together for the good of all. This presumes that we are willing to look deeply into our individual religion, to seek out the original message of its Founder, and to live that message as well as we can. Doing so, we shall deepen our uniqueness while at the same time broadening our friendship with the other, who is different.

My purpose here is to bring the knowledge and understanding of this dialogue to bear on the events of

September 11, 2001 – the suicide bombings of the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and the downed plane in rural Pennsylvania – through an examination of a spin off tragedy at a Sikh Temple in upstate New York. Burned beyond repair; this was the first attack against a place of worship after the 9/11 events. It occurred on November 18th, 2001 and affected Sikhs in the northeastern United States and Canada, all of whom used the temple:

On 11/18/01, the Oswego County Sheriff's Department responded to a fire at the Gobind Sadan Temple in the Town of Palermo, which appeared to be criminal mischief and arson. An intensive investigation followed involving the Oswego County Sheriff's Department, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), the FBI, the Oswego County District Attorney's Office, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Office of New York State Fire Prevention and Control, and the Oswego County Fire Coordinator and Cause and Origin Team. The federal agencies responded to this incident as members of the National Church Arson Task Force, which began in 1995. The investigation culminated in the arrest of three people being charged with either Arson or Conspiracy.

This has been a high-profile case in regards to the actions of September 11, 2001 and the possible relationship of the nationality and/or religious beliefs of the members of the Sikh Temple. Many members of the community and throughout the nation were totally outraged and devastated that an act of this nature could happen in our county. We were immediately joined by many federal agencies because of the possibility of this being a hate crime.

(Report of the Oswego County (New York) Sheriff's Office, December 14, 2001. Excerpted from The IRC News, January 2002, Volume 13, Number 1 of the The Interreligious Council of Central New York).

The arson at the Sikh Temple happened to real people in a real place during a given time period. The elements of this tragedy carry a significance that is far beyond the event itself and evoke a response that, as we shall see, suggests a greatness of spirit that stretches one to new growth. Looking at this event, it is possible to pinpoint characteristics of classical spiritual practice available in every religious tradition: the spiritual journey itself, divine/human interaction as it has been known down through the ages, tapping into the roots of religious teachings through its founder, and the choice of response to adversity: rejection, victimization, acceptance, forgiveness. Further, such an event invites us to move beyond the local setting to deepen our global awareness and even our cosmic consciousness.

This arson – like the events of September 11 – has meaningful implications for all of us. It is an event involving people of many faith traditions; it is significant for this study of Sikhism because in it Sikhs (as do others) respond in consonance with their own religious tradition and with appropriate interfaith behavior, as their founder, Guru Nanak, would have wished. The tragedy becomes both a challenge and an opportunity. That we might better understand it, I invite you to join me in walking with “Lions of God” as we look at what, where and to whom it happened, and at what they did about it.

Setting

The tiny towns and villages of central New York seem at first to come from a bygone era. The industries of an earlier time have long since moved away, leaving a countryside marked with forested hills and running streams. The Seneca, Oneida and Oswego Rivers cut through the land before flowing into Lake Ontario, and one can easily understand why the tribes of the great Iroquois Confederacy settled in the area. The land is rich and fertile; the four seasons occur with unerring consistency, each blessing the land with its individual

character – seeding, blossoming, bearing fruit, lying fallow, until the cycle is once more repeated. Children learn the ways of the forest and the rivers at an early age – hunting deer and fishing for salmon. Fruit orchards and small vegetable farms give the area a rural charm, a serenity that makes this seemingly idyllic countryside beautiful at any time of the year. Some twenty years ago a small farm in the area was purchased by Gobind Sadan, a Sikh farming community outside Delhi, India. It was named Gobind Sadan USA and has slowly drawn Sikhs from northeastern United States and eastern Canada for times of prayer and retreat. There is a resident spiritual leader who has come from India and especially on weekends, Sikhs come from near and far to enjoy its quiet peacefulness.

The people affected by the arson that occurred in this quiet setting belong here in different ways. Some are native, having been born here; others – like the Sikhs – are strangers, having come from other places; yet all might be called neighbors, living together in the same rural area with more or less knowledge of one another's histories and lifestyles. Those who have lived here for generations, passing the land down from parents to children and then to grandchildren, are "natives"², belonging to this place by virtue of ancestral heritage and by being born here. Natives are usually content in their home place, faithful to its life and memory. They are attuned to its subtle ebb and flow, to the undercurrents that have created and nurtured its unspoken culture. While it is the native who carries the ancient rhythms and treasures of a place, today this belonging is diluted by modern travel and communication, which tends to flatten every place into an indistinct and terrible sameness. One's place becomes everywhere and nowhere at once. Unfortunately, this dilution can lead to a sinister tribalism and need for turf control. Natives then want their place to be only theirs – as it always has been, for those who have always been there. To accomplish this, the native view may grow limited and narrow. We have seen the results of this in places like Northern Ireland

and Yugoslavia. The natives begin to define their belonging in exclusive and narrow terms so that those who embody anything different are seen as threats to be feared, even opposed with hatred and violence if necessary. The true native knows, however, that the treasure of a place is enhanced by difference. Hospitality toward those who are different recognizes that genuine identity emerges from mutual respect, dialogue and appreciation between the native and the stranger. The embrace of the other who is different enriches and deepens, even while it challenges :

Others – “strangers” – have moved here from somewhere else, even from another country or continent. They also seek a good place to live, to raise a family and find better opportunities for their children. But these strangers bring with them an unknown quality that threatens even while it intrigues. The stranger may become a friend, but one does not know that at first. Strangers intrude into the safe, known milieu of the native. The stranger comes from somewhere else, often from another culture with a different set of values. Rituals and customs, even one’s dress may differ as it did in the case of Gobind Sadan USA. When this happens, the stranger’s very presence lets us know with certainty that everything is not contained in our world. There is more, there is something else that we do not know but that the stranger does know. Our very lifestyle can be called into question. Our ignorance can be threatening, a breeding ground for fear. Ignorance and fear, if not dispelled by knowledge, will lead to hatred and even violence toward what is feared. The stranger is not welcome!

On December 14th, the Oswego County Sheriff’s office announced the arrest, on arson charges, of two teenaged county residents who reportedly admitted setting the fire. A third suspect was arrested on

conspiracy charges. The suspects believed, according to their own statements, that worshippers at the (Gobind Sadan USA) center were supporters of Osama bin Laden, and set the fire after a night of drinking. Charges that include federal hate crimes may be lodged against them.

– *The IRC News, January 2002, volume 13, Number 1.*

The teenagers who committed this crime are young, yet they fit the profile of natives whose ignorance led to violence. They believed that the name *Gobind Sadan USA* meant “Go Bin Ladan” and that the strangely turbaned people seen on the property were followers of Osama Bin Ladan. Unfortunately these teenagers will carry with them for the rest of their lives, the effects of their actions, a violence done – first and foremost – to themselves.

As for the Sikh strangers in the area, they were at first shocked and dismayed by the ruin of their holy place, and concerned for the sacred artifacts within. Gobind Sadan USA is the only foundation of Gobind Sadan (Delhi) that has been established outside of India. Naturally the Sikhs in India were also concerned :

When members of Gobind Sadan saw the charred remains of their temple, their first concern was for the scripture inside the burned out building. Miraculously, the Sacred Word, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, was untouched. Its 1430 pages compiled over 400 years ago, teach that there is One God for all creation, and love and respect for all people. It teaches that the Torah, the Bible, the Koran, and the Vedas are true. “It is a scripture not just for all people, its revelation is for the whole universe,” says Baba Virsa Singh, the founder of Gobind Sadan. The group gathered to offer prayers of forgiveness for those who committed this act and to ask God that the ignorance and hatred that may have motivated them be swept away.

– *The IRC News, January 2002, Volume 13, Number 1*

The Sikhs, strangers from a distant land, responded in this instance with concern as well as wisdom, desiring to bring good out of the crime of hatred and violence perpetrated against them. Doing so, they opened everyone to that marvelous resiliency of spirit of which human beings are capable, propelling them to knowledge beyond ignorance and courage beyond fear. They acted as neighbors and friends. Through their words of forgiveness, they opened doors to a diversity of view that provided the raw material for creative insights into life and all it contains. Nothing less. The strangers welcomed and in so doing, were themselves welcomed!

There are lessons for all of us here. The native who is in place and the stranger who comes – both are vulnerable in exposing themselves to one another. This very vulnerability seeds the openness that is such a wonderful opportunity for growth. Both the native and the stranger are called upon to handle the situation gently, and with great care. Only then can they emerge as neighbors, both having the same right to belong in a local place. Neighbors rely on a certain courtesy and friendliness among each other while at the same time allowing the respectful distance that gives each the free space to inhabit his/her own life. Such is the reality and the possibility of interfaith dialogue.

Within hours, supporters of tolerance began to mobilize support for the Sikh community. (Sikhs are frequently mistaken for Muslims, due to the turbans that men of both faiths wear). Local churches offered the loan of their sanctuaries. Volunteers came to see if they could aid with the rebuilding. More than one hundred people of all faiths gathered at a vigil at the Center three days after the fire.

– *The IRC News, January 2002, Volume 13, Number 1.*

Seeing with the Eyes of Faith

What we humans are, what we do and what happens

to us always carries within it an element of the spiritual. How could it be otherwise when we come from God and are in relationship with God? If we believe in God, we have the privilege of viewing life with the eyes of faith. Seeing this way – through the prism of personal and communal belief in God – invites a deeper understanding than we might have without faith. We have seen this over and over in the lives of people who face adversity; certainly it has been obvious in those who suffered in the September 11 tragedies. Ultimately it is faith that makes sense of things, that makes them bearable. The Sikh Temple arson affected those involved at the point of their faith commitment. As we shall see, both natives and strangers discovered a deeper understanding, a more profound meaning in this event. Examining it, we also stretch to new understanding of God and of one another. Certain characteristics of classical spiritual practice are found in every religious tradition. They include (among others): 1) the spiritual journey; 2) awareness of the presence of God; 3) seeking confirmation from the taproot or source of the religious tradition; 4) choosing an appropriate response for the journey. Let us examine these characteristics in view of the upstate New York arson.

1) The Spiritual Journey

During the course of doing interfaith work over thirty years, I have found that most people can point to one moment or happening in their lives that marked the beginning of their spiritual journey, or at least their awareness of that journey. They may have been alone or in a crowd; it may have seemed ordinary or extraordinary; but something revealed God to them. With heightened consciousness, they knew in that moment that they were connected to a higher Power. Such a moment is pivotal. One knows the Greater One, and one cannot go back to un-knowing. So the journey begins, and even if one lives one's whole life in the same physical place, one is uprooted and on one's way! Where the spiritual journey

will lead takes a lifetime to discover. There are vast mountains to climb and descents into deep valleys to face. One will rest by cool, refreshing waters along the way, but always, as the poet Christopher Frye says, "affairs" will be "soul-sized," for "the enterprise is exploration into God."

We see this quite graphically in two scriptural examples of the spiritual journey: one with Abraham, the beloved Father of Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, the other with Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh Tradition. Abraham's uprooting is literally that :

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abram went as the Lord had told him... and set forth for the land of Ca'naan. *Genesis 12:1-4,5³*

The founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak, was born in 1469 in a village in the northwest of India (now a part of Pakistan). Even as a young person, he was deeply spiritual. The turning point of his life came when he was twenty-seven. Following his usual routine, he went early one morning to bathe in a stream near his village, and disappeared into the river for three full days. He was believed dead after a search for his body proved fruitless, but in fact, he was caught up in what the ancient texts of Yoga call *jalastambhasamadhi* ⁴. Sikh literature describes the experience of Nanak during his "trance-in-water":

As God willed, Nanak, His devotee, was escorted to His Presence. Then a cup filled with the Liquid of Immortality was given accompanied by the command: 'Nanak, pay attention! This is the cup of Holy Adoration of My Name. Drink it... I am with thee and thee do I bless and exalt. Go, rejoice in My Name

and preach to others to do the same... Let this be thy calling Nanak himself refers to this assignment with deep gratitude: "I, a jobless minstrel, was assigned a rewarding task."⁵

Nanak obeyed the call of God to begin a spiritual journey just as Abraham did. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees for Ca'naan; Nanak set out with two companions – one a Muslim and one a Hindu – to tell people what he had learned of God, making four difficult missionary journeys into the world of his time – India, the Himalayas, Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Middle East, Turkey and Arabia. In both of these instances, the call of God was real and really heard, and the response of the hearer resulted in immediate obedience to that call. They were on their way; the call was clear; it was all that mattered. The blessing of God would flow down upon them as they journeyed on in faith.

The vicissitudes of time and history blunt the sharp clarity of such moments, relegating them to long ago, and to people of another time who have grown larger than life through time's passage. Such moments seem way beyond the realm of our experience. How can one possibly speak of Abraham and Guru Nanak in the same breath as one speaks of misguided teenagers, modern-day Sikhs transplanted from India and Pakistan to the northeastern United States and Canada, and all the other "local people" who are just that, ordinary local people?

But isn't that the point? God is God yesterday and today, then and now. God is present, active, available and accessible to us today just as in the distant reaches of long ago history. The invitation to the spiritual journey, the journey with God is given to us today as surely as it was to Abraham, to Guru Nanak. If we do not understand this, the cloudiness is ours. The call of God always comes...

For the teenagers who are only beginning life's journey, this very event may be the moment of God's call. While alcohol dimmed their ability to make sound decisions (they

had been drinking the night they committed the arson), in the aftermath of their crime and with the sharpened awareness of hindsight, they will have the opportunity to grow beyond their ignorance. They have the potential to respect and even appreciate others who are different, though no less human, than they are. May they seize the moment offered them!

For the Sikhs who have come to upstate New York, they have already journeyed far. This tragedy offers a moment of catharsis along the way. How they respond, how they sort through the meaning of this event in view of the deeper call of God in their lives, is the issue. A building used for worship was torched; a sacred space was desecrated. How does one react to such desecration? How will the Sikh Community respond?

For the rest of us, the community at large? This event has happened in our midst and has been identified as a spin-off of the September 11 criminal activity. How will we respond? Is it obstacle or opportunity along our journey?

Each of us has to grapple with the implications of this event, just as we have to grapple with the events of September 11. What does it mean for us individually to know that there are those among us who hate others, and in this hate, destroy what is sacred to them? Do we have such hatred in us? We have to integrate such happenings, no matter their horror and magnitude, into our own journeys. We cannot skirt them, pretending that they do not touch us. Following our spiritual journey demands that we pass through the pain that they cause.

2) The Presence of God

The purpose of the spiritual journey is the encounter with God. The more conscious we are of God, the more we desire to meet God and to dwell in the Divine Presence. This is the case whether we are natives or strangers. When we recognize this, we realize that the presence of God is for all of us. This leads us to want to live responsibly with one

another, following the *Golden Rule* ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"), which can be found in all of the major religious traditions.⁶ The encounter with God takes place through learning, as we gain knowledge and personal experience of God. For most of us, this knowledge and experience are nurtured within our religious tradition through its rituals, symbols and teachings. These provide the environment and tools that facilitate the encounter.

A religion's Sacred Scriptures are a major instrument in conveying the presence of God to us. As people travel life's spiritual journey, they use their Scriptures. The texts contain the message of God, and thus God's presence is made available. This is certainly true of the Torah in Judaism, the Bible in Christianity and the Koran in Islam. Further, the stories, teachings, hymns and prayers found in the Scriptures of a given religion, help the people form a common bond with their own spiritual history and interaction with God. One is linked to God, to the wisdom teachers and holy heroes who have preceded us on the spiritual journey. Sacred Scriptures, by their very nature, are at the heart of one's religion, to be revered because they bring us into the presence of God within the religious community.

It is not different with the Sikhs. Their Sacred Scripture or Holy Book is called the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Sikhs considered it, rather than any living person, to be the Supreme Spiritual Authority of the Sikh religion. It was finally compiled by the last of the ten Gurus of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, and contains the teachings of six of these Gurus, the first five and the ninth.⁷ It is interesting to note that the Founder and first Guru of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, taught that there is one God. He believed from the beginning that Hinduism and Islam, the two religions of his area, represented different but viable pathways to the one God. For this reason, the *Guru Granth Sahib* also contains contributions from Hindu and Muslim saints who were known to Guru Nanak during his lifetime. In view of the interfaith cooperation involved in the

event under discussion here, it is interesting to see the interfaith character of Sikhism present from its inception, and in its most sacred texts.

The poetic teachings and hymns of praise of the *Guru Granth Sahib* lead the Sikh congregation into the presence of God. For this reason, they are given a central place in every Sikh Gurdwara (temple). When possible, a continuous reading takes place from early morning until night :

People come to seek peace and return their prayers and make their presence before the Holy Book... Whenever a person comes to pray or a congregation gathers, a hymn will be going on. The scholars explain part of the hymns. Everything done there is from the hymns written in the Holy Book. In the gurdwara you are present and you can sing along or flow with your mind or with your voice. You can close your eyes and keep listening. The idea is to do whatever you need to get peace. I don't go to the gurdwara as an obligation to God, I go because I want to. If I am disturbed or need peace I go there to seek it.⁸

In the Gurdwara at Gobind Sadan USA, the only thing not burned in the area where the Sacred Scriptures were kept, was the *Guru Granth Sahib*. While everything else was scorched, blackened and water-soaked beyond repair, the Scripture remained intact. Not one word was dampened, blurred or smudged. The 1,430 pages of text filled with hymns of praise, remained untouched by fire or water – a sign, for those who see with the eyes of faith, of the enduring presence of God. Words found in the *Guru Granth Sahib* itself reinforce this vision:

The Guru's Word abides with my soul.

It does not sink in water; thieves cannot steal it,
and fire cannot burn it.

In pondering the meaning of this, it is important to avoid a magical interpretation of the facts. That the *Guru Granth Sahib* was not damaged may have a perfectly natural

explanation based on the simple ways in which fire, wind currents, heat intensity, air and water pressure interacted in the Gurdwara. Yet, the fact remains that while all else was lost, the Holy Book, considered to be the living Guru of the Sikhs, is with them still. We are not saying that God intervened in magical ways. What we are saying is that within the real and present unfolding of events, God is present. And, with the eyes of faith, we can choose to see this mysterious presence. It is not unusual to do so; such indications of God's presence are available to us in the history of many traditions. One of the most obvious is found in the Judeo-Christian tradition:

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up."

When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

- *Exodus 3:1 – 6, Holy Bible, NRSV, op.cit.*

Today, we live in the density of materialism, rather than in the clearer atmosphere of spiritual awareness. This density dulls our appetite for things divine, so we do not always see them easily. This does not mean, however, that God is not with us. The tragedy of September 11 and the many adverse events that followed, have brought us numerous examples of people moving beyond material concerns in the search for spiritual

answers to difficult questions. There is no easy way to explain why one family is whole and another suffers loss, why one group's temple is unharmed and another's is vandalized.

For the Sikhs who have made a spiritual home at Gobind Sadan USA, the wholeness of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the living Guru of the Sikhs and their most sacred possession, provides reassurance. It speaks to them of the presence of God with them still in the mystery of this tragic crime of arson.

For the larger community – many Christians, Jews, Muslims and others – this may be a simple sign that God's presence is with us today in the same mysterious way that it has always been. Moreover, it is clearer in this adversity perhaps, than it had been before. With the wisdom of childhood, one little girl summed it up well. Her mother, a local Methodist minister, explained to her that the fire had not damaged the Sikh Scripture although everything else had been destroyed; the child responded, "Mommy, that must mean that God is really present here!"

3) Seeking the Taproot

As people travel their spiritual journey, they gain familiarity with God within their religious tradition. Often, they study its founder and history as a reinforcement of their own knowledge and experience. Sikhism was founded more than five hundred years ago in the Punjab in northern India; this is still its center today, with the Golden Temple in the city of Amritsar at the very heart of Sikh worship. Today Sikhs can be found all over the world. Those who live far from their homeland experience a diaspora situation. They have made their way to a new place where they are a minority, but have brought with them their heritage, customs, rituals and teachings. For the Sikhs of upstate New York, the northeastern United States and eastern Canada, Gobind Sadan USA is a "home away from home" with ties to Gobind Sadan in India. Since its opening in the central New York area more than twenty years ago, Gobind Sadan USA has been an interfaith

center in the diaspora where all are welcome; it offers times of prayer and meditation, retreats, as well as programs in interreligious dialogue and understanding.

The events of September 11 and the arson attack two months later, led the Gobind Sadan USA community to seek meaning for these tragedies at the taproot of their tradition. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is that root, with healing offered through its hymns of praise of God. When one praises, one focuses on the positive message of love and compassion contained in the Scripture, and blessing comes of this. One can then move beyond anger, resentment and hatred. Tapping into this source, the community as a whole has found a quiet, sacred space within itself where it can grapple with the tragedy at hand. Community members have found meaning as they sing the praises contained in the Holy Book and savor the presence of God. Being silent in this inner place, they reach the taproot of their own spirituality where compassion and forgiveness flow freely. Here they are nurtured by the ancient, healing words of praise which lift into the clarity of peace beyond hatred. This is what *the Sikhs* have done as they sought to understand their situation; this is what *the larger community* of diverse religions has done, as it supports the Sikhs with offers of worship space, counsel, labor and funds for rebuilding; as it joins them in prayerful forgiveness.

4) The Choice: Forgiveness

"If praise is the mechanism by which we heal, by which we refocus our minds on the power of the Infinite within us," said a spokesman for Gobind Sadan USA, "then forgiveness is the gateway that allows us to open and accept the blessings which flow from praise – the blessings of peace of mind and compassion toward our world. Conversely, an unwillingness to forgive stands in the way of our reconciliation not only with those who have offended us, but also with God." The choice for forgiveness rather than anger, resentment and hatred is the choice made by many people affected by the tragedies of

September 11, 2001. It is also the choice of the Sikh community in upstate New York.

Forgiveness means that one chooses to give up resentment against or the desire to punish those who have offended us, to not be angry with them and to pardon them, to give up all claim to punish or exact penalty for an offense. No matter the offense, forgiveness is no small matter; it takes courage. It means moving beyond one's own feelings, to a greater value. When one is offended, the natural response is retaliation-in-kind, anger and even hatred. We want to "get even". When we do not forgive, we end up becoming victims of the pain inflicted by others. If we choose to remain victims, we wallow in the offense rather than pass beyond it; we do not heal.

The *Golden Rule*, found in every religious tradition, states "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Each of us wants to be treated justly and with kindness. To forgive when we have not been treated nicely or with fairness takes largesse of soul and spirit. Such largesse comes only when we live deeply the teachings of our religious traditions. Forgiveness allows us the better part of valor: graciousness which pardons those who would torment and offend us. Despite acts of ignorance and hatred, God's message of love and hope survives.

To their credit and with the guidance of Baba Virsa Singh, the founder and spiritual leader of Gobind Sadan in India, the Sikh Community at Gobind Sadan USA issued the following statement upon the apprehension of suspects in the Temple Fire:

We have offered a prayer of forgiveness that the ignorance or hatred that led to this senseless act be taken away. However there is a distinction between forgiving a person and forgiving the act they committed.

There is no doubt that the act was terribly wrong – no

matter what the motivation. Laws exist to hold people accountable for their actions – and we will not interfere in the process of law.

Yet we know God is all forgiving to those who seek His forgiveness. And the Sikh tradition, like all others, calls on us to forgive others. (forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us) so they may seek forgiveness from God, and learn not to commit acts of violence or hatred again.

For if we show hatred to those who act against us, then how will they ever understand that God, whom they can't see, is forgiving? And out of our hatred, we will only perpetuate the cycle of violence that exists in the world.

By forgiving our enemies we have the opportunity to create peace. Though the building was burned, prayers from the holy scripture were being recited even as the announcements were made. Those prayers were for peace and love for all humanity so that the hatred and ignorance which spawns these terrible acts will be overcome by love and forgiveness.

The IRC News, January 2002, Volume 13, Number 1.

More than one hundred people from the larger community joined the Sikhs in an interfaith prayer service on a bitter cold November afternoon in front of the burned temple, representing several faiths :

Within hours (of the fire), supporters began to mobilize support for the Sikh Community... Local churches offered the loan of their sanctuaries. Volunteers came to see if they could aid with rebuilding. The outpouring of love in response to what is perceived as an act of hatred and ignorance is overwhelming... The Rabbi from the Temple which itself was victim of arson last year, called. The Imam from the Mosque said "If one of our holy places burns, all our holy

places burn.”

The IRC News, January 2002, volume 13, Number 1.

The head of a community task force organized when a school was subjected to bomb scares, called to help... A local quilt-maker offered to make a patriotic quilt to be raffled off to help the rebuilding effort... An architect called to say “You don’t know me, but we rebuild churches that were victims of arson, and if you’d allow us we would like to help you rebuild yours.” He recruits volunteers from all over who join with local volunteers in assisting whatever contractor is chosen for rebuilding efforts.

Progress on the Journey

The “natives” and “strangers” of the upstate New York area have taken their forgiveness one step further: they have become neighbors and friends! The president of the school board where the teenage perpetrators attended high school visited Gobind Sadan in India on two occasions at his own expense. There he apologized to Baba Virsa Singh and the community for the burning of the Gurdwara. During the second visit, he took part in an interfaith educational seminar. Visits of the young from India to Gobind Sadan USA and from the United States to Gobind Sadan, India are being planned so that an interfaith dialogue of the next generations can begin. Local educators are developing educational materials on diversity and interreligious awareness with the hope that young people might discover that human beings are not so different one from another when they are motivated by trust and loving compassion.

Each of us experiences adversity along the way of our spiritual journey. Each of us hesitates from time to time to give full belief to God’s presence. We each enjoy freedom of choice in responding to life situations. Disbelief, anger, resentment, hatred and violence are one way of responding; acknowledge-ment, acceptance, forgiveness and compassionate love are another. The events of September 11, 2001 have

touched us all. Our choice of response to them is part of our spiritual journey.

A New Setting

When upstate New York groups visit India as planned, they will at first be "strangers" who experience another way of life, another culture. In the midst of that experience however, they will have the opportunity to grow beyond strangeness into neighborliness and friendship with a people, in a culture established on the other side of the world. Perhaps they will go at sunset into a beautiful garden dedicated to Jesus, and called simply, *Jesus' Place*. This is a large garden, almost edenic in feeling, that Babaji¹⁰ had built in honor of the One whom Christians worship. In this garden, there is a simple, almost life-sized sculpture of Jesus with arms wide open and a welcoming smile on his face. Every evening as the sun is setting, more than one hundred candles are lit around the shrine of Jesus and slowly, with great reverence, the Lord's Prayer is recited. The "native" Sikhs and local villagers prepare Jesus for the night by placing a shawl over his shoulders and if it is cold, a woolen hat and mittens. They guide everyone present in lighting the candles and lanterns. When all is ready, the Lord's Prayer begins... The Sikhs join in this prayer as do all who have come, visitors from wherever in the world – Russia, Northern Ireland or Europe, North and/or South America. All pray these words together, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." The words have a heightened meaning in this Sikh Center that honors the Founder of Christianity. The presence and compassionate love of God is a sure reality; forgiveness is the great power that carries God's love forward as we pray together in a Sikh Community garden, and then go quietly into a night aglow with stars.

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Sikhism: The Post-Modern Religion of the World

Daya Singh Sandhu*

This paper focuses on the characteristics of post-modernism and emphasizes that Sikhism is really the post-modern religion of the world. It also discusses several issues of postmodernism such as human rights, racial and gender equities, multicultural and diversity issues, etc. that are specific to post-modern era and provide solutions from the perspective of Sikhism.

What is Post-Modern Era?

There has been a chain of interlinked eras marked by special characteristics and special names. Numerous and varied classifications have been presented from the historical viewpoints. But for brevity's sake and for our purpose here, I would like to identify only three major eras: pre-modern, modern, and post-modern. The main thesis of this paper is to demonstrate that Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism, even though he was born in pre-modern era, was far ahead of his time to present religious and spiritual solutions to our present/day post-modern problems.

Pre-modern era, between fourteenth and seventeenth century, is also described as the renaissance period of vigorous artistic and intellectual activities. Cartesian-Kantian or modern era, encompassing eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is generally characterized as an era of rationalism, characterized by "individual subjectivity, interiority, and self-subsistence

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autonomy" (Downey, 1993, p. 746).

There seems to be no consensus about the beginning of the post-modern era. I venture to propose that the post-modern era began on October 24, 1945 after the Charter of the United Nations was signed at San Francisco in USA. After the colossal havoc, death and destruction caused by two world wars, it became quite clear that humans are not necessarily rational and the future of the whole humanity is doomed.

In the twentieth century more people died than all people put together in the previous centuries. Even at the cusp of the new millennium, September 11, 2001 tragedy caused by terrorism and current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are the stunning reminders that humanity is in peril begging for survival. The prevalent world plight is reminiscent of Guru Amar Das' words, "ਜਗਤ ਜਲੰਦਾ ਰਖ ਲੈ ਆਪਣੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰ", "God! Please save this world, it is on fire."

Characteristics of Post-modernism and Attributes of Sikhism

In this section, I would like to discuss some unique features of post-modernism and propose that they are characteristically different from the previous era of modernism. I would also like to introduce Sikhism and describe some of its basic tenets as introduced by Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Since the central theme of this paper is to argue that Sikhism is the religion of the post-modern world, many lines from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, will be cited to prove this point. Furthermore, I will present all information under various subheadings. These subheadings are intended to highlight post-modern concepts, followed by quotes from the Sikh Scripture.

1. Reality Transcends Sensory Experiences

Post-modernism has questioned the empirical methods of the modern era to search for the absolute reality. It contends that ultimate reality can never be found through senses and scientific instruments. According to a post-modernist, reality

cannot be determined objectively, it is more complex that what meets the eye.

Expressing similar view from the perspective of Sikhism, Virk (2000) wrote, "Since the reality is trans-empirical, it cannot be known through sense experience in the way in which empirical/scientific knowledge is gained. Reality is comprehended through intuitive experience for it transcends both the rational and the sensory aspects of human experience" (p. 24).

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, asserted, "ਜੋ ਦੀਸੈ ਸੋ ਚਲਣਹਾਰ," "what can be seen, must vanish" suggesting that objective reality is misleading. The supreme truth remains hidden beyond the reach of our senses that are capable of finding only the partial truth. In Sikhism, mysticism is considered a viable approach to gain the complete or the real knowledge.

Mysticism is a reality which is beyond the grasp of our senses. While describing the mystic world, Guru Angad pointed out that :

In this realm, one sees but without eyes; one listens but without ears; one walks but without the feet; one works but without the hands; one speaks but without the tongue; thus attaining life in death. O Nanak, one meets God after realization of the divine law.

Virk (2000) sums up the significance of mysticism pointing out that "the truth scripture speaks about is the direct outcome of the intuitive or mystic experience of the ancient seers. It contains what is borne out by their direct and authentic experience. The mystics seem to be able to attain non-ordinary states of consciousness in which they transcend the three-dimensional world of everyday life to experience a multi-dimensional reality which is impossible to describe in ordinary language (p. 26).

According to Lyotard (1984), scientific and rationalist discourses of the modern era have lost their legitimacy during the postmodern times. Quantum physics and chaos theory are

some prime examples to demonstrate that science cannot make reliable predictions. Truth transcends the obvious.

2. Post-modern Era: An Age of Globalization

Due to a large number of significant technological advances in the post-modern era, the world is rapidly shrinking. Globalization has become the buzzword everywhere. Some profound changes are taking place which are distinctly different from the modern era. Clearly, there is rethinking and reconfiguration of modern era ideologies causing many tensions, confusions, and insecurities. Post-modern era can be described as an era of anxiety.

For this shrinking but volatile world, there is a dire need of one universal religion. interestingly, from the gallery of many religions, Sikhism stands tall and distinct to fulfill this aspiration. Reverend H.L. Bradshaw's words describe adroitly such message of hope :

"Sikhism is a Universal world Faith, a message for all men. Sikhs must cease to think of their faith as just another good religion and must begin think in terms of Sikhism being the religion for this New Age. ... The religion preached by Guru Nanak is the faith of the New Age. It completely supplants and fulfills all former dispensations of older religions. The other religions contain the truth, but Sikhism contains the fullness of truth."

After studying Guru Nanak's proclamation that "ਨਾ ਕੋ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ, (There is no Hindu, there is no Mussulman', Noel Q. King (2002) proposed that between this dichotomy there is a third something, *tertium quid* about Sikhism. I would like to add that this third something is very unique which is distinctly universal and deals with the whole humanity, not just some special ethnic or religious groups. As such, *Guru Granth Sahib* is truly the first interfaith scripture that is replete with universal message for all humans inhabiting this planet earth.

3. Shattering Myths in Post-modern Era

Lyotard (1984) described post-modernism in nutshell as “the loss of meta-narrative”. Meta-narrative here is defined as the myths by which humans organize their lives. In the post-modern era, many previous overarching stories that held civilizations and mindsets intact are destructed. They are not the governing and authoritative powers anymore. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was clearly a revolutionary iconoclast of myths and hollow rituals. He was one of the few who walked on the road untraveled to deconstruct many religious myths. For instance, Guru Nanak debunked the myth that earth is standing on the horn of a bull. Instead, Guru Sahib explained that the whole universe including the earth are run by God’s laws called “*hukam*.” Guru Nanak’s answers generally are simple, but very logical and profound.

4. Post-modern Issues and Sikhism

As a result of globalization, post-colonial awakening, technological innovations, and economic concerns, there are several issues that have become very specific and major concern of the post-modern era. Such issues include global violence or terrorism, racial and gender inequities, diversity and multicultural issues, human rights violations, and eco-violence to name a few.

I would like to discuss each issue mentioned above and present lines from *Guru Granth Sahib* to illustrate how Sikh Gurus provided answers to our post-modern problems. In this sense, *Gurbani* is clearly post-modern in nature.

A. Human Rights Issues

At the end of the Second World War (1945), the world community came together to address some of the problems of the humanity through establishment of the United Nations Organization. This organization mainly focused on the issues of the human rights.

A cursory look at the Preamble of the United Nations

Organization (1945) will make the readers wonder if many of its lofty ideals have been borrowed from *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. The major emphasis on human rights, dignity and worth of the humans, and the equal rights of men and women as advocated in the charter of the UNO, have been the prime and central message of the Sikh Gurus dating back to the fifteenth century. It seems that Shri Guru Nanak had envisioned the basic problems of the post-modern humans 500 years ago. Some lines from *Gurbani* are presented below to prove this point:

"Nanak naam chardi kala, tere bhane sarbat a bhalla" is one of the much quoted line from the daily prayer of a Sikh who prays for the welfare all humans. Social justice, equity among races and genders, compassion for all people, and voice against oppression

are some of the hallmarks of Sikhism. ਅਵਲ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ, another line from *Guru Granth Sahib* emphasizes the kinship of mankind.

B. Equal Status of Women

Sikhism is perhaps the first and the only religion of the world that has granted equal status to women. In Indian society, like everywhere else, women have been historically oppressed and severely down degraded for centuries. A woman was referred as "man's shoe, the root of all evil, a snare, a temptress." (Kaur, 1992, p. 96). Guru Nanak shattered the myth of implied inferiority and challenged women's second rate treatment. He questioned the rationale for treating women in a degrading manner when he asked :

In a woman, man is conceived,
From a woman he is born,
With a woman he is betrothed and married,
With a woman he contracts friendship.
Why denounce her, the one from whom
even kings are born?

Tenth Guru, Shri Guru Gobind Singh, named women as

“kaurs” or the crowned princesses. Women’s movement for equal rights in the post-modern era now, actually has roots in Sikhism.

C. Diversity Issues and Multi-culturalism

There is much talk these days about diversity and multi-culturalism. Two predominant and major underlying themes of multi-culturalism are to promote equity and social justice. Five centuries ago, Guru Nanak preached the whole world as one large multicultural family. He proposed that all human beings regardless of their race, color, caste, and creed are equal. Shri Guru Gobind Singh’s line : “*Manas ki jaat, sabhe ek hi pahichanbo*” (All humans are equal) is the central theme of the Sikh ideology. According to Guru Nanak, the persons who love all humans as equals, are of the highest kind. Guru Sahib preached that in every heart it is the same God, none else than Him speaks from there : “ਸਭੈ ਘਟ ਰਾਮ ਬੋਲੈ ਰਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੋਲੇ ਰੇ.” (Guru Granth , p. 988).

According to Guru Nanak, God does not discriminate people by their sectarian religions such as Hindus or Muslims. In response to Kazis’ questions in Mecca, whether Muslims are superiors or Hindus, Guru Nanak declared :

*Pushan phole kitab no Hindu vadda ke Musalmanoie.
Baba aakhe hazian shubh amlan bajhun dono roie.*

(Bhai Gurdas, Var 1-33)

Those are the superior persons who perform the superior deeds. Without good deeds, persons suffer regardless of their religious background. Guru Nanak also rejected every type of discrimination, whether it was based on the creed, color or caste. “*Phakkar jaati, phakkar nao. Sabhna jian eka shao*” (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 83).

The following lines can be considered the centre-piece of *Guru Granth Sahib* (page 1349) that highlight the equality among all humans, the ultimate goal of multi-culturalism :

*Aval Allah noor uppaya, kudrat ke sabh bande.
Ek noor te sabh jagg upjya kauñ bhale ko mande.*

The same reflection of God is in every human. So how could one be recognized superior and the other one as inferior?

D. Alcohol and Drugs Abuse

Alcohol and drug abuse are the scourge of the present era. Guru Nanak condemned the use alcohol in a very logical manner :

If one wants to enjoy ecstasy, he should "drink" the name of God, And that is the way to realize Him. One should strictly avoid Alcohol by drinking which one loses one's control of faculties.

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 554)

Here is another quotation from the Guru Granth :

One should drink the nectar of His name and not the useless alcohol.

Drinking alcohol means losing the valuable life in gambling.

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 360)

E. Violence and Terrorism in the Postmodern World

I believe that Guru Nanak's message is the most relevant to address the post-modern era's problems of violence and terrorism. Guru Nanak preached that humans have to shed their ego-centrism to combat religious and political conflicts. Leaders and people have to learn to take principled positions on divisive issues. They also have to learn how to self-discipline themselves. In Sikhism, *kaam*, *krodh*, *lobh*, *moh*, and *ahinkar* (lust, anger, greediness, attachment, and naughtiness) are considered as five main culprits that lead to problems in life. I believe that these are the same main reasons that cause conflicts at the national and international levels.

Guru Nanak's message is a message of hope. To make this world a peaceful place, it is important that people practice truthful living. Guru Nanak asserted that "all else falls short of truth, yet, higher still is truthful living." *(Guru Granth*

Sahib, p. 62) Internal purity and moral conduct are highly prized in Sikhism. "Sikhism enjoined upon its followers to observe external as well as internal purity" (Dhillon, 2002, p.14).

F. Appreciation of Nature and Ecological Considerations

Contrary to many other religions, Nature is eulogized in Sikhism. In the following lines, Guru Nanak proposes that not only Almighty has created the Nature, but He also resides in it. Also, He is the Creator of all the forces and laws of the universe and He is responsible for existence of life in everybody :

*Appine aap sajio, aapne rachio nau
Dui kudrat sajie kar aasan ditho chao.*

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 463)

Guru Nanak also proclaimed that this universe is real, not an illusion as suggested by some other religions :

Real are Thy continents; Real is the universe; Real are these forms and material objects; Thy doings are Real, O Lord."

Guru Angad calls the universe as His chamber when he writes, "*Eh jag sache ki hai kothri. Sache ka vich vaas*"

(Guru Granth Sahib, M 2, p. 463)

Nature as the reflection of God is greatly appreciated in Sikhism. Hence, post-modern era's ecological considerations are equally important to the followers of Guru Nanak.

Conclusion

Miss Pearl Buck, Nobel Laureate, noted that there is some special appeal in Sikh Scripture when she said, "I have studied the scriptures of the great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes (From the Foreword to the English translation of *Guru Granth Sahib* by Gopal Singh Dardi). I believe that the basic reason for this appeal to the heart and mind, is due

to the relevance of Guru Nanak's message to the post-modern problems.

Also, as Dr. Davinder Singh Chahal (2000) noted, "Sikhism is a scientific and logical religion, therefore, it can be universally accepted by the generations of humanity to come during the Third Millennium, and beyond. A critical analysis of Nanakian Philosophy indicates that both are intertwined with each other as hand in glove" (p. 7).

For survival of humanity in these troubling times, Sikhism, because of its universal nature, can be called the religion of the future humankind. Archer's words are noteworthy in this context when he asserts:

The religion of the Guru Granth is a universal and practical religion. The world needs today its message of peace and love.

I would like to conclude this chapter with Ek Ong Kaar Kaur Khalsa's (2002) observations. She claims that Guru Nanak was the first post-modern scholar. He was centuries ahead of his time in his view of language, culture, the natural world and God. In fact, he is the perfect guide for the post-modern person because post-modernism leaves people feeling empty, that life is without meaning. But Guru Nanak takes the deconstruction of post-modernism and then says- see-at the heart of it-there is amazing creative play that we can't comprehend or define, THAT, my friends is God. And if you meditate and be what God created you to be, then it is a natural, human, normal experience to have a conscious relationship with God."

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Guru Granth Sahib : An Inter-faith Dialogue

S.K. Jolly*

Sikhism, synchronises with universality, humanism, liberal outlook and progressivism. Sectarian exclusiveness or caste and class ridden ideas, orthodox thinking have no compatibility in Sikhism. In the medieval ages it came like a revolution in the ideas and thoughts of the people. When there was all round degeneration, it comes with a vision for egalitarian society assuring complete human freedom and equality. Guru Nanak describes that dark period as :

The Kali age is the knife, the kings are the butchers and righteousness has taken to the wings. Yet it is the dark night of the falsehood and truth, where is the moon of the truth, the vain search hath made me mad. And I see not path in the dark.¹

Guru Nanak also says that the dogs of Lodhis, have spoiled the priceless inheritance when they are dead no one will regard for them.² Nothing was visible, there was utter confusion and chaos. Guru Nanak and his successors emphasised on three important aspects which became pillars of Sikhism : *Nam Japo, Kirt Karo and Vand Chakkho*, Meditating Thy name, one should work hard and then share it. Service to mankind was considered to be the service to God. The main message was loving God and Thy creation.

Origin and Composition of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the holy book or Scripture of the Sikhs. It is voluminous document of 1430 pages

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containing 5984 hymns composed by 30 Bhagats, Sufis and Gursikhs and 6 Sikh Gurus arranged in 31 ragas or musical meters. This sacred book was first compiled by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji in 1604 and is known as *Adi Granth* also. *The Adi Granth* can be rightly called as the common holy book of the Bharat varsh. It has hidden seeds of Indian unity and integrity.

Bani or words of *Guru Granth Sahib* are sheer, magic, vibrant, inspiring, enthusing and carrying universal message. It is a perennial source of wisdom and balanced thought. The verses of the Scripture provide convincing answers to the various problems faced by man every day. Its words of power, empowers men to keep their mind and heart pure, clean and disciplined.

What is *Bani* of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

Guru Nanak Dev Ji has written that :

“O Lalo, I am uttering whatever comes from the Almighty God.”³

Guru Ram Das says, “Believe in *Bani* as truth...God, the creator is Himself causing it to come from the mouth of Guru.”⁴ Some rare persons of high intelligence will ponder over the *Bani*. The *Bani* is of a great Saint and takes a person to a high position.⁵ Guru Amardass has said, “One can get over, lasting peace from the *Bani*.”⁶

Hail, *Bani* is truth and joins one with truth.⁷

“Hails *Bani* is truth, some person of high caliber will ponder over the *Bani*. This *Bani* is of a great saint and some persons of high caliber will understand it.”⁸ Guru Ram Dass has said, “*Bani* is Guru and Guru is *Bani* ! It is full of nector. If a person acts according to what is written in *Bani*, the Guru can be perceived.”⁹ Guru Arjan Dev Ji said, “The *Bani* has come from the Almighty Lord and removes all worries.”¹⁰

This revelation in the Holy *Granth* is to be understood, in totality with objectivity. When in the moments of utter reverence, we bow before the *Granth* considering it the living

embodiment of God, we pay our love and homage to all those whose words are given honourable position in this *Granth* by the Gurus themselves.

It is really amazing how Guru Arjan Dev the compiler of *Granth Sahib* was able to go through the vast amount of contemporary and earlier composition of the saint poets of India. When we ponder over the Parliament of *Granth Sahib*, we can see the saints representing various parts of India who had different religions, castes, creeds, professions, languages, dialects and class as well. The beauty of *Granth Sahib* is unity in diversity.

Brief Sketch of the Contributors to the Guru Granth Sahib

It would not be out of place to speak something about the origin and thoughts of the Bhagats.

Bhagat Jaidev the author of the famous sanskrit poem '*Gita Govind*' hailed from Bengal. He was Brahman by caste and his two hymns are compiled in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Seikh Farid or Farid Shakarganj was a Sufi Saint of Chisti Silsila and disciple of Khwaja Qutab-Ud-Din Bhakhtiar Kaki. He has contributed four hymns and 130 *shlokas*.

Bhagat Namdev was a calico printer from Maharashtra. He was Vaishnava in his early days, but *sagun bhakti* took him to *nirgun bhakti* later on. He adorns the *Granth* by 60 hymns.

Bhagat Trilochan was a Vaishya by caste and contributed 4 hymns.

Bhagat Parmanand was a resident of Kanauj and Brahman by caste. His one hymn was incorporated in the *Granth Sahib*.

Bhagat Sadhna hailed from Sindh and was a butcher by trade.

Bhagat Beni has also contributed one hymn and nothing much is known about him.

Bhagat Ramanand a Brahmin belong to the school of Ramanuja. In his later years, he broke down the barriers of

caste and accepted various disciples from Shudras.

Bhagat Dhanna was a Jat from Rajputana whose simplicity and innocent bhakti is exemplary.

Bhagat Pipa was Worshipper of Durga and a King of Gagraungarh.

Bhagat Kabir was a Weaver by profession and saint by choice whose fame had spread for and vide. His followers are known as Kabir Panthis. His verses are found in *Bijak* and *Adi Granth*.

Bhagat Bhikan was a sufi saint from Kakori in Lucknow, U.P.

Bhagat Sur Dass and Sunder also contributed to *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Some Bards of the times of the Gurus have been given due place in *Granth Sahib*.

These Bhagats and Sufis who belong to different parts of the country wrote in *Sadhukari* or saint language but other languages and dialects are also found like Marathi, Gujarati, Awadhi, Eastern Punjabi, Lehendi, Dakhni, Western Hindi, Eastern Hindi, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Prakrit and Aprabhransha.

Some scholar feel that *Adi Granth* interprets *Vedas* in the language of the masses, others says that the saint poets rejected the authority of the *Vedas*, *Puranas* and *Shastras*. It is no wonder that references, images and expressions from Vedic and Puranic philosophy has been widely used in *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Sikhism is deep rooted in the Indian philosophy but it rejected the ostentatious, ceremonies, rituals, *karmkand*, caste system and corruption in religion by the Brahmins and other contractors of Dharma. It laid more stress on the building of character and a good human being.

The reading of the *Vedas* without understanding them, penance, self mortification and visiting pilgrimage sites were discarded in favour of the Guru God. The uttering of the true name was made meritorious and carried the merit of visiting

all sixty eight Hindu Holy places. Guru Amar Dass said celibacy, self discipline and pilgrimages are the faith of those ages. In the dark age the glorification of the Lord's name is the only righteous deed.¹¹

While giving new interpretations to Muslim's, tenets of faith, Gurus gave them a new meaning and a new definition :

Make mercy thy mosque, faith thy prayer mat, what is just and lawful thy *Quran*, modesty thy circumcision and civility thy fast. So shalt thou be a Moslim, make right conduct thy *Mecca* truth thy spiritual guide and pious deeds thy creed and prayer.¹²

About the five prayers, *namaz* of a day it has been emphasised that the first is truthfulness, the second honest earning, the third charity in God's name, the fourth is pure intent and fifth the Lords admiration and praise. Repeat the creed of good deeds and then call thyself a Moslem.¹³

Guru Amar Dass says, "The world is burning, O Lord, be Compassionate and save it redeem it through whichever gate it comes unto You.¹⁴ The Gates mentioned by Guru Amar Dass are the Religions of the World.

In this sense, nature and teaching of *Guru Granth Sahib* crosses all boundaries and barriers in giving it a national and international character. It makes Sikhism not the religion of the chosen people, but instead it is the religion of the entire humanity. Today the whole focus is on the world as one family and globalisation while centuries ago, *Guru Granth Sahib* gave this message.

Love for thy country is flowing out in the hymns of Gurus. If the deteriorating conditions and degeneration in society pains, you, if you feel hurt and concerned then you are a patriot. After witnessing the slaughter and blood shed by Mughal invasions, Guru Nanak felt anguished, disgusted and outraged. He says, "Having conquered Khurasan Babar has terrified Hindustan. The creator takes no blame on Himself and has sent the Mughals as messengers of death.¹⁵ The very word 'Hindustan' was used by Guru Nanak for the first time.

It was an identity given to our nation which makes it the most nationalistic and integrating factor.

Guru Nanak's *Bani* contains various verses which show the impact of Islam on India and Hindus. It covered their eating habits, dress, language and religious thoughts.¹⁶ Guru Nanak was against the Mughal conquest of India and Islamisation of India. Yet he felt a great need to help both Hindus and Muslims to understand that Akal Purakh, the eternal One whom Hindus call Ram and Muslims call Allah or Rahim was the same. It was great message for those turbulent times and as much relevant today.

What We Need To Do Today

Call of the time is to carry the message of *Guru Granth Sahib* to far off places and distant lands. It should be published in various languages. There should be wide circulation of *Gurbani*. Different functions should be arranged at distant and remote places to make people aware of this great jewel and the universal message of peaceful co-existence must reach in every nook and corner of the world. It has to be understood and interpreted in the true spirit.

Guru Granth Sahib liberates humanity from pettiness and hatred. It is a special gift, a platter full of varieties to God to humanity. Guru Arjan Dev says, "In the platter are placed three things-Truth, Contentment and Meditation. The Nector name of the Lord, who is the support of all, has been put there in. If someone partakes of this, if some one relishes it, he or she is emancipated.

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2. *Ibid*, p.360.
3. *Ibid*, p.722.
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6. *Ibid*, p.1175.

7. *Ibid.* p.514.
8. *Ibid.* p.1277.
9. *Ibid.* p.982.
10. *Ibid.* p.628.
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13. *Ibid.* p.141.
14. *Ibid.* p.853.
15. *Ibid.* p.360.
16. *Ibid.* pp. 472, 903, 119E.

***Guru Granth Sahib* and Religions of the World**

S.S. Dhanoa*

1. Religion has been a socio - cultural institution of the human society. We can say that human beings have been born into this world with religion. We can even assert that religion is a necessity of the human condition, like breathing, drinking or eating. Ninian Smart has observed "throughout history and beyond in the dark recesses of man's earliest cultures, religion has been a vital and pervasive feature of human life."¹ Mircea Eliade, the editor of the Encyclopedia of Religion has concluded, "religion is a primal condition of life, not a cultural product" and added that religion "is an element in the structure of consciousness and not a stage in the history of consciousness."² Karl Marx, of course, declared God to be a fraud or some 'other worldly phantom' and that "man makes religion, religion does not make man it is the opium of the people." However, it is religion that has survived the Marxist onslaught, while the edifices built on Marxist ideologies, are crumbling and cracking all over the world. Sociologists seem to be grudgingly coming to terms with the phenomenon of the religion in man.³ Emile Durkheim stated, "we admit that these religions rest upon a specific experience whose demonstrative value is, in one sense, not one bit inferior to that of scientific experiments, though different from them."⁴ Turner recognizes that "Religion is a social cement, binding individuals and social groups into a communal order."⁵ Max Weber has noted that the "elementary forms of behavior

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motivated by religions or magical factors are oriented to this world.”⁶ Joachim Wach and William James have described the religious experiences of mankind but we have so far not agreed on a definition of religion. Suffice, perhaps, it would be to say, that religion is something concerned with the reality that underlies and sustains the world of appearances and the innermost being of man. All religions owe their origin to some ineffable experience of their human founders which was described by them through symbols, ceremonies, rituals, language, oral or written idioms, parables and myths. Dr. Radhakrishnan, holding the same views, said, “all the religions owe their inspiration to the personal insights of their prophet founders.”⁷ John Hick takes us further, when to the genesis of religions he postulates the reasons for the diversity of religions in human society. “The great religions are all, at their experiential roots in contact with the same ultimate divine reality, but their differing experiences of that reality interacting over the centuries with the different thought forms of different cultures, have led to increasing differentiation and contrasting elaboration.”⁸ This observation is strikingly similar to Guru Nanak’s view, who said that just as one sun makes for many hours, days, months and seasons in the year, similarly one Creator has appeared in different forms to humanity.⁹

2. The ineffable experience that the founders of religions had, was somewhat imperfectly described by them in the language and tradition of the socio – cultural group to which they belonged. The linguistic capability in man is unique among the living beings and man has been improving his linguistic capability as he has been advancing in his mastery over the world, but still, there are areas of perception and feeling for which communicable linguistic symbols have not been developed and a large part of what we call religion lies in such areas. It is perhaps on this account that all the major religions of the world are covered by two religious traditions i.e. Abrahamic and the Indian or Hindu tradition. The Jews, Christians and Muslims, who follow faiths which comprise the

Abrahamanic tradition, came to India fairly early, but there were hardly any attempts at promoting mutual understanding of the Indian and Abrahamanic traditions. It was the north Indian Saints and the Muslim Sufis, who tried to work out a common ground for the two traditions.

3. The design of the world has been such that it has been an ever changing world, with human being too, changing with it. The source responsible for the change in human being and his environment has been constantly revealing itself to humanity so that they could remain attuned to that source and adjust themselves to the changed surroundings. According to John Hick, historically religious development can be described as "movement of divine self revelation to mankind." This hypothesis "suggests to us that the same divine reality has always been self – revealingly active towards mankind and that the differences of human response are related to different human circumstances. These circumstances, ethnic, geographical, climatic, economic, sociological, historical, have produced the existing differentiations of human culture, and within each main cultural region the response to the divine has taken its own characteristic forms,"⁹ Prophets and founders of religions were those human beings who were charged with a mission to put humanity back on a straight path that was in danger of being lost to them due to the fog and mist produced by the changes in man and his environment. The experience of the prophets and founders of religions was not available to the followers and as time passed, the content of the religious truth got overlaid with forms and rituals which instead of supporting and strengthening the religion, tended to smother and choke its vitality. This set the stage for the appearance of a new synthesis, a prophet with divine revelation or a new religion. This seems to be the purport of what Lord Krishna had said in Bhagvadgita "I bring myself into being whenever there is decline in righteousness and the prevalence of unrighteousness in consequence."¹¹ *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is replete with references about God intervening

in human affairs to project His glory and provide protection through His devotees.¹²

4. In the Abrahamanic tradition, Bible and Quran describe how God has been sending His prophets to guide man from time to time. Jesus Christ said in the Bible "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil."¹³

5. The maximum change that humanity and the world has witnessed so far, has been brought about in the last five hundred years. We became aware of the new world and the new means to harness and manipulate the forces of nature. Contemporaneously and even preceding it, we can not fail to take note of the unprecedented religious ferment, witnessed in both the religious traditions. It was the Bhakti and the Sikh movement in India and Reformation and Sufi saints in Christianity and Islam.

6. Guru Nanak was born in 1469 C.E. followed by nine Gurus who were one with him in spirit, the last being Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 C.E.)

7. The fifth Nanak Guru Arjan Dev (1581-1606) decided to compile the works of his four predecessor Gurus and his own writings arranging them according to the ragas of the Indian music system author wise serially numbering each verse to guard against interpolations. He himself signed at the end of each raga in token of authentication of what he had dictated to the scribe Bhai Gurdas.¹⁴ No scripture matches his compilation in authenticity as the person whom the God's word was revealed himself dictated it, corrected it and authenticated the same for the posterity. Guru Nanak makes it clear that what he had written did not come to him from his own mind but it came from the God almighty.¹⁵ Guru Arjan went over the religious writings that were current till his time and wherever he came across a similar Divine inspiration in any of those writings he included that in his compilation. This unique compilation after the addition of the verses of the ninth Nanak is the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the living Guru of the

world. The nearest term that we can use for the SGGS in the Abrahamanic tradition is what the Bible in John 1:1 describes as Word or Logos. The SGGS is the latest revelation available to humanity as it was in 1604 C.E. that Guru Arjan completed his compilation. The whole 1430 pages of the SGGS are addressed to humanity in general regardless of caste, race, colour, creed, belief or sex. The equality of all men and women before one and only God for whom numeral one has been used has been the refrain of the SGGS.¹⁶ Guru Arjan at the close of the compilation says that in the SGGS he was placing before humanity a platter which had in it the truth, contentment and contemplation.¹⁷ All through and everything in it is the name/word of God. Whoever partakes from this platter he/she gets redeemed. Only those whom God in his grace blesses are able to partake from this platter.¹⁸

8. The divine revelation or sacred teaching in all the religious traditions, is intended to link humanity to the Reality or God. This is the literal meaning of the word religion derived from the Latin word 'religare' which means 'to bind together.' Exigencies of the worldly situation for humanity, however, are such, that in all the religious traditions, we find, that either human beings subvert religion to make it a tool for achieving their worldly ambitions or, they take refuge in religion through renunciation of the worldly responsibilities and strive for their individual salvation. Guru Nanak was a householder and so were all the successor nine Gurus. Asceticism among the Sikhs was not encouraged. It was emphasized that in God's order, the family life and its obligations, were the means provided for developing and strengthening one's capability to achieve salvation or union with the Reality. The world of appearance and change, in which man lives, is a creation of the True one. He sustains it, destroys it, and He has his abode in it. Guru Nanak has called it to be the true abode of righteousness and goes so far as to say that the whole purpose of the creation is to project the Lord's glory through His devotees.¹⁹ The vicissitudes of the householders life enable a man to transcend

his 'haumai' or ego-self, without which no spiritual progress is possible.

9. Guru Nanak in his teaching also built upon the relationship that an individual has with his cultural group. A person can grow up as a human being only in a cultural group as Kroeber has observed. It (culture) is acquired by learning from other individuals of the species, and it is practiced somewhat modified by each member of the human race individually, and his modifications enter into the continuum or joint product, which is passed on to subsequent individuals. The chief mechanism which makes communication of human culture possible, is the faculty of symbolization and speech.²⁰

10. Sikhs were enjoined to get together at a convenient place to sing hymns and listen to the word of the Gurus and these bodies were called sangats which became the basic units of the emerging Sikh community. The early Sikhs derived their identity from the "Sikh Sangats." The Gurus and Bhai Gurdas have emphasized that 'sangats' were the abode of the Guru/God. Moshin Fani, who was a contemporary of Guru Hargobind, the sixth Nanak had witnessed the proliferation of the Sikh Sangats all over the country and a later observer Sujjan Rai Bhandari was struck by the feeling of kinship that prevailed among the Sikhs and the devotion they displayed for their Guru. The striking feature of the Sikhs that he noticed was their getting together in 'sangats' to sing hymns of their Gurus.²¹ This was a unique contribution of Guru Nanak to religion particularly in the Indian tradition. The 'sangats' were the units devised by the Sikh Gurus, where transformation was to be brought about in man from self-centeredness to what John Hick calls Reality-centeredness which was the objective in all religious traditions. It was in this endeavor that the individual needed to draw strength from the group. Guru Nanak made it clear that religion was not something merely to be debated about but it was a way of living much more than a way of cognizing the truth. He said that truth is higher than everything but higher still was the truthful living.²² It is like

walking on a razor's edge. It is a path on which human beings often stumble and even fall and what sustains them is Guru's word, God's grace and the support of the 'sangat.'

11. Guru Nanak shared the religious view about humanity that there is an element of divine in every human being as also the scientific materialistic view, that physically a person's body is a product of union between their father and mother and consists of elements similar to other living beings. It is said in the Bible that God created man in his own image and also that he is created out of dust. Similar is the position in the Quran.²³ So, when I have made him and have breathed into him of my spirit.²⁴ The third Nanak said that "o, my body, the Lord put His light in you and so you came in the world."²⁵ Gurbani goes on to state that the divine blessing on a human being continues after birth if he remains steadfast in his faith in God. "God protects us in the mother's womb and no harm comes to us. The same God is our refuge in life. You must understand with your sense of discrimination."²⁶ We know that, in the design of nature, a human child enjoys immunity from infections etc. for about six months after birth. Gurbani also recognizes that human beings enjoy mastery over all other forms of creation. It says, 'you enjoy mastery over all other forms of life and you are the over-lord of this earth.'²⁷ There is a clear recognition that at a physical level, a human being is no different from other animals. "God has created your body in accordance with His design and you must know that it must, for sure be reduced to dust."²⁸ The physical body, however, is the medium and the receptacle where divine light is lodged. It is the kindling of this light that redeems the physical part. Whenever the divine light in a human being, gets connected to the divine light or energy that sustains the universe, that human body becomes blessed and holy. Human birth is, therefore, considered a unique opportunity for fulfillment of the purpose of human existence as Kabir has said, "precious is the human birth, it comes not to hand again, as the fruit when ripe, falls and does not stick to the tree

again.”²⁹ Gurbani enjoins that “one who in the heart enshrines the lotus feet of the Lord and whose tongue utters His name, nurture well such human body, for it cherishes God.”³⁰ Conversely a life lived for the enjoyment and preservation of the physical body, is held to be worthless and for such a person, it was better that he was not born.

12. The physical body of every living organism survives, develops and procreates during the life span of the organism, within an over all system, in our biosphere. The mind, as a consciousness and response organ is present even in the simplest organism like amoeba. We take the mind to mean as an organ which provides consciousness, memory, reason, intellect, feeling, emotion, intuition and will, we can say that the mind is a complex phenomenon which is provided for the survival of the organism as well as for enabling it to manipulate and adjust to the environment. Mind is an abstract noun, a collective name, that we give to the operations of a living substance when it displays consciousness and responds to the environment on the basis of that consciousness.

13. The Sikh Gurus have made the human mind their primary focus. Guru Nanak does not approve of any religious practice, ritual or learning that does not bring about a change in the human mind and he emphasized that the mind alone can bring about the required change in the mind. Mind is also recognized as being connected to the divine. “Mind you are a spark of the divine light, so grasp the true source of your being.”³¹ and “the mind is in the body and the True One is in the mind.”³² The mind has been described as always fickle and at the same time a very powerful human faculty. It has been compared to a monkey because of its fickleness and to a drunken elephant because of its strength in going after its objective.

14. The dichotomy in which the human mind is caught is because of its function to serve the physical body of man in which its needs, desires and compulsions of survival, make it go after various objects, while its other function requires it

to discriminate and decide what is socially and religiously right or wrong. This dichotomy has been the subject matter of study of philosophers, psychiatrists and wise men but they could not resolve it because the dichotomy is created by God Himself and only through religion, the dichotomy can be resolved. This is described by Kabir beautifully. "The habit of the mind is that it pursues itself. If, therefore, one kills one's mind what will one achieve? Who is the seer who can kill his mind? If one kills one's mind whom does one emancipate? It is through the mind that life force speaks and without the subjection of mind, one cannot worship God. Says Kabir that, he who can resolve this mystery finds the mind as the God of the three worlds."³³

15. When one embarks on the journey to control one's mind, one finds that mind is not like a blank paper. One has on it, already the impressions of one's actions, thinking and inclinations. Added to this are one's self-centered desires and aspirations. The only way one can get out of these ties, according to Guru Nanak, is through Nam which is awakening of God inside.³⁴ The awakening of God inside requires that man transcends a God-created basic obstacle in his path i.e. his *haumai*. We know, that every one of us lives in a human cultural group, and, in the interaction with the other members of this group he develops his personality. Our knowledge of the development of the human personality tells us that from initial concerns about one's own needs, a human being progresses and incorporates in his personality a concern for others in his cultural group and those who have the best integrated personalities, become truly altruistic with concern for the entire human race.³⁵ It is this development of personality or self in human being, which has been called 'haumai' by Guru Nanak. The word has no exact equivalent in the English language. However, no one can grow up as a normal human person in human society without 'haumai'. Gurbani mentions that among all living beings, human beings have been born with the infirmity of 'haumai'.³⁶ 'Haumai' is

a snare in a sense, in which human beings are caught. Psychologists tell us that the perception of reality in the world by human beings is coloured by their 'haumai' described as self.³⁷ The religion is all about transcending this God given infirmity by human beings. Arnold Toynbee observed "self-centeredness is one of the necessities of life because it is indispensable for the creature's existence..... Self centeredness is thus a necessity of life but this necessity is also a sin. It is a problem that continually besets human beings."³⁸ 'Haumai' identified as an infirmity in a human being by Guru Nanak, in a way, explains the Biblical concept of the "original sin." The Garden of Eden story perhaps symbolizes the development of self-awareness or 'haumai' in human beings which resulted in his being driven out of the Garden of Eden. Adam becoming self-centered could not remain in God's presence. The possibility to work his way back, through the way shown by the founders of religions or prophets has been kept open for all human beings. Guru Angad, the second Nanak describes 'haumai' He says that "The nature of 'haumai' is that we act in 'haumai.' The bondage of 'haumai' has bound us to the round of births and deaths. How is the 'haumai' born and in which way lies the release ? This is the will of God that in 'haumai' one follows the writ of habit or one gets pushed by one's past. 'Haumai' is a chronic malady but within also lies its remedy. If the Lord be in grace, one practices the word of the Guru/ God. Says Nanak that thus is this malady cured."³⁹ 'Haumai' has also been described as a thin curtain that does not permit humanity to have a vision of the Divine. The fervor of the theistic devotion among Bhaktas and Sufi saints, and the accompaniment of music with hymns sung in praise of God, are all intended to help a person in rising above his 'Haumai' to have a glimpse of the Lord but our self-centered actions in the mundane world emanating from our 'haumai' constantly strengthen the bonds of 'haumai' and the world around us. Guru Nanak in 'Japuji' a part of the daily recitation for the Sikhs, starts with describing as to how ritual

purification of body, meditation, accumulation of worldly goods and all intellectual attainments are not of any avail to us unless we become an instrument of God's will. When one is able to remain in tune with God's will, only then one can be free from 'haumai.'

16. Jesus Christ and Guru Nanak have used the metaphor of a new birth when a person treads this path of vision of God. "Let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me, anyone who wants to save himself will lose it but anyone who loses himself for my sake will find it."⁴⁰ Only the Guru-centered ones look into the mind within the body and worship God with love with which their 'haumai' evaporates.⁴¹

17. Humanity, for Guru Nanak, has only two classes. They are either 'manmukhs', the self-centered ones, or 'gurmukhs', the Guru-centered ones, whom scholars like John Hick prefer to call as the Really-centered ones. Mcleod calls the 'manmukh' condition of man as the 'unregenerate' condition where he seems to be in error. 'Manmukh' condition of a human being really, is the normal condition of humanity as they perceive reality through their 'haumai' in their minds. It is only the 'gurmukhs' who can see the world, and in it, the unfolding of the God's design as God is present in every particle. God's presence leaves him struck with wonder in every moment that passes. The God-centered person is able to integrate his personality and control his mind with the Guru's word,⁴² whereas the self-centered person merely talks and does not display integrity and character in his actions. He is blind to the presence of God around him and inside him. The Guru/God-centered individual acts without 'haumai.' His actions and living are truthful and he lives in contentment. A 'gurmukh' lives in 'sahaj' which is a tension-free living where goodness comes naturally to him. Being in tune with God's will, he lives in the present. The past does not worry him and he has faith about the future that everything will work out for the good of the Guru/God-centered in line with what the Bible says "and we know that all things work together for good to

them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."⁴³ Many verses in Gurbani have a similar theme.

18. The Abrahamic tradition religions have an angel of God, who has a role to lead humanity astray. The angel is called Devil, Satan or Iblis. He was responsible for the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the heaven. Gurbani is of the view that in the design of God for man in this world, he has created an agent called 'Maya' that leads a self-centered man astray. It is mentioned in Anand "as is the fire of the womb within, so is the fire of Maya without. Both fires are alike, and yet are the play of the Lord. When the Lord so wills, one is born into this world to the great joy of the kindred. And then one is no more attuned to God and the writ of Maya begins to run. Maya makes us forsake God and love for other things wells up in the mind. Nanak says, that they who are attuned to God, by the Guru's grace attain to God in the midst of Maya."⁴⁴ Incidentally Bible describes the Devil as a serpent who tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and in Gurbani too, in many verses Maya is described as a serpent.⁴⁵ Maya and 'haumai' in Gurbani have a symbiotic relationship. Both are God created and work to strengthen each other, either singly, or together they lead human beings away from God. "Maya is where one is bound to pain and pleasure and one acts in 'haumai'.⁴⁶

19. The remedy for both 'Haumai' and 'Maya' is to pray for the grace of God/Guru, live according to the will of God, and keep the word of God/Guru in mind and God's name in one's heart. It is a reconstruction of the self that one has evolved from one's own experience and wisdom and its replacement by a self based on the divine word, abiding faith in God's/Guru's grace, and pray to Him always to guide and save one from temptation as is indicated in Sura-Al-Fatihah of Quran or in Bible, (St. Matthew 6:9-13) or in "Gauri Bavan Akhri" in the Guru Granth Sahib.⁴⁷

20. The society that Guru Nanak envisages is a society of equals without distinction of race, caste, creed, colour or

sex. It is clearly brought out in Gurbani, that every age has its religion and its God-ordained seers or prophets and in the present age, the religion was the awakening of God in man (NAAM) in the company of the God-centered or gurmukhs. This awakening was possible through different religious traditions of humanity. Guru Nanak has laid out a highway for the mankind who venture to set on the God-ward path. The social order for the society could be monarchy but ideally it is a democracy, where justice must prevail, all citizens must be free, fearless and equal, no one should be subjected to exploitation and oppression. A Sikh is expected to earn his livelihood and share it with others. Guru Nanak made his preference known⁴⁸ when he said that he would like to associate himself with the lowest of the low and he saw the blessing of God in a society which ensured that the lowest of the low were well looked after.⁴⁹ His teaching is summed up in "Naam Japo, kirit karo, wand chhako" i.e. recite the divine Name, earn your living and share your earnings with others.

21. Guru Nanak had witnessed the conquering of India by Babur and the accompanying destruction, pillage and rapine. There are four verses of Guru Nanak on this subject. He declared that Babur had come to India with a wedding party of sin to forcibly consummate his marriage with the Indian bride after having the marriage rites performed by Satan. Guru Nanak however, did not see the destruction and rapine of Babur's attack as being outside God's design. He said that if the community had realized their having strayed away from God and had not devoted themselves to merely seeking sensual pleasures and amassing of wealth through sin, the calamity could have been avoided. Where such disasters visit a community, every one suffered but the responsibility has to be assigned for the disaster to those who wield authority in the community. God, in His design selected an instrument in Babur to inflict punishment on the community gone astray, and even in that, His glory did not diminish and He continued to witness the unfolding of His design all over.⁵⁰ The view

has a parallel in the Abrahamic tradition. The Bible refers to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sin. When Abraham pleaded with God to spare these places for the sake of some righteous persons in these cities, God offered to spare the cities if he could find ten righteous persons. Ultimately the only persons spared were Lot and his daughters.⁵¹ In the case of Nineveh, God spared the city as they changed their way of living on being warned.⁵² The Gurbani view on this subject seems to be that God in his grace, if invoked appropriately, intervenes in the affairs of man to save him individually or collectively notwithstanding His laws and design of the world in which retribution followed automatically for the self-centered and the evil. Guru Nanak associated the attributes of love and compassion with God while He remains an ideal justiciar "Thou are ever generous to the poor, an ocean of mercy. Thou seest the transgressions of man, yet Thou remain ever bountiful."⁵³

22. Guru Nanak has used the numeral one for God. A numeral is free from any cultural association and any likely confusion in the meaning in a linguistic symbol. After one, He has used the Hindu sacred symbol for the immanent God i.e. Onkar. The immanent God can be comprehended and named but the only name it can be given is Truth or Reality i.e. 'Satnam.' About 'Satnam' it is said that it is He Himself and is the primal Name and Naam of Gurbani symbolizes His essence. He becomes the Creator Being i.e. "Karta Purakh", signifying that He has created something that is different from Him but at the same time He is dwelling in that, 'Purakh' after 'Karta' also means that He alone is the creator and in creation He does not require a female. Since the other has now come in existence, therefore, Guru Nanak mentions the next two attributes of the divine that He is fearless and sans malice i.e. Nirbhau, Nirvair. His projection in His creation is not affected by time i.e. he is Akal Murat. He is neither born, nor, does he die, i.e. 'Ajuni' His projection is through Himself i.e. Sai Bhang. He as Guru is the Eternal Enlightener of man and all

grace i.e. Gurprasad. The Guru aspect of God is all grace. Bhai Gurdas gives an idea of this grace when he says that if a Sikh takes one step towards the Guru, the Guru takes ten million steps to meet him. Guru, however is not the human form that could be seen as Nanak but it is the logos or the word described as 'sabad' in Gurbani. The position of the Guru described in Gurbani is very akin to the position of Jesus Christ in the Bible even to the extent that just as for a Christian salvation can only be through the grace of Jesus Christ, the God of Nanak comes within the reach of a Sikh through the grace of the Guru. The True Guru used the person of Nanak to manifest Himself but the Guru has been an eternal aspect of God. It is for this reason that 'Bhats' give credit to Nanak for the enlightenment of theistic devotees (Bhagats) like Jaidev, Ravidas, Trilochan, Namdev and Kabir who had appeared before Nanak.⁵⁵

23. Guru Nanak had stayed at Kartarpur during the last 17 years of his life. His stay attracted a large number of Sikhs and visitors. It was at Kartarpur that a daily routine was set for a Sikh. He was to get up very early in the morning having the Name of God in mind. After ablutions, he was to recite the 'Japji' a composition of Guru Nanak. Thereafter, the Sikhs were to congregate in a Dharamsal for singing hymns composed by Guru Nanak and to listen to discourses on spiritual matters. Soon after sunrise they had to follow whatever occupation they had for earning their livelihood. They congregated again in the evening by sunset for reciting 'Rehras' and 'Harikirtan.' Before going to sleep they recited 'Sohila.'

24. Bhai Gurdas has written about only two visits of Guru Nanak after he had settled at Kartarpur as a house holder, one to Achal Batala and the other to Multan.

25. Guru Nanak, during his travels, had a dialogue with the Sidhas or the Nath yogis which is included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib as 'Sidh Gosht.' The purport of the dialogue was to show to the Sidhas that they did not have to renounce the

world to achieve the salvation that they were seeking, nor was it necessary to suffer penances and austerities for that purpose. Was it not shameful that after renouncing the world, they had to go begging for food from householders of the world ? The human mind which is the instrument for transforming human existence from self-centeredness to God-centeredness, did not shed its character with such practices. It is the word of the Guru/god that brought about such a miracle. When Guru Nanak visited the Achal Batala fair, the multitude in the fair flocked to the camp of Guru Nanak, which made the 'Sidhas' who were also there, jealous of Guru Nanak. They started demonstrating their powers to work small scale miracles to show their ability to disappear at will or to fly in the air etc. The Sikhs who were with Guru Nanak could neutralize the 'Sidhas' and prevail over them, which in a way finished the Nathyogi challenge to Guru Nanak's mission.

26. Guru Nanak next visited Multan, a seat of Muslim divines. Bhai Gurdas calls it a 'Ziarat' or pilgrimage. Guru Nanak is perhaps, the only religious figure in the Indian tradition, who has recognized and endorsed the Islamic spiritual tradition. His constant companion on his travels was a Muslim minstrel. Mardana, which was an anathema to the orthodox Hindus. Throughout, Mardana remained a Musalman. Guru Nanak's approach to Islam comes out clearly in his verse in Rag Majh. "Difficult it is to claim to be a Muslim, to do so one must love and act like a true Muslim. First, he must be devoted to faith in God and the Prophet. And remove all pride and vanity of wealth, through charity, as the file removes the rust. After becoming a Muslim, one should abide by Islam, and dispel all delusions about life and death. He should gracefully accept the will of God, and through utter dedication have faith in the creator. If then he shows compassion to all creatures, he would be worthy of being called a Muslim."⁵⁶ When the Muslim divines of Multan heard about the arrival of Guru Nanak, they sent him a cup of milk, full to the brim, which Guru Nanak returned after placing a jasmine flower on

it. The full cup of milk had symbolized that they recognized Mohammad to be the last Prophet, so they saw no place for Guru Nanak so far as Muslims were concerned. Guru Nanak's reply through the jasmine flower symbolized that they were welcome to their full cup of milk, to which he was only adding fragrance from his side. This visit epitomized the success of Guru Nanak in finding acceptability among the religiously inclined Muslims, which gave rise to the saying "Nanak Shah Fakir, Hindu Ka Guru, Musalman ka pir."

27. Guru Nanak as his Multan visit shows did not approve of constricting boundaries of religious traditions, be it Hindu or Muslim. He showed that falsehood and pretense in religious traditions can be exposed by presenting the truth with love and humility and he would accept the truth wherever he found it.

28. Guru Nanak's message to humanity was to demonstrate omnipresence and omnipotence of God. Whoever set one's sail Godwards was a co-traveller and a friend for him. The divine word served to awaken God inside the human being and hearken to the God's effulgence and presence all over and around in the universe, known and unknown. It is God's will and order that prevails and the God/Guru-centered ones are those who can perceive this God's design/will and transcend their individual selves to be one with the universal self. He recognized the process of transformation from self-centeredness to God-centeredness among human beings and he laid out a smooth express highway by his example and teaching for everyone who was inclined to take this Godward journey.

29. Guru Arjan addressing the followers of the Hindu and Islamic traditions describes in one of his verses their different religious practices and sums up the discussion by saying that mere religious practices were of no avail. The purpose of religion is to make human beings recognize within themselves the will and order of the Supreme Being unfolding itself all around and inside them.⁵⁷ This capacity in human beings gets generated when they transcend their individuality or what

Gurbani calls 'haumai.' This requires human mind to be free from all its acquired wisdom and cleverness and its substitution by the word of God or 'Sabad' in terms of Gurbani.⁵⁸

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Guru Granth Sahib : As a Precursor of Inter-Faith Understanding

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One of the fundamentals of the inter-faith understanding is the recognition of efficacy of other faiths in dealing with the ills of society. Usually, no religion considers other religions equal to itself. It is only *Guru Granth Sahib* which recognises that all religious dispensations are capable of elevating the human soul. Guru Amardass, the third Sikh Guru has stated in a hymn :

The world is burning, save it O God out of Thy mercy
Save it through which ever dispensation it can be
saved.¹

Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, the compiler of *Adi Granth*, has accepted the separate identity of Hindus and Muslims with their diverse customs and ceremonies. He has stated :

One man invoked Ram another Khuda
One man worshippeth Gosain another Allah
Some speak of the cause of causes,
other of the Benevolent
Some talk of the extention of mercy others of Merciful
Some bathe in Hindu sacred places others visit Makka
Some perform Hindu worship, and other bow
their heads in the Muhammeden Fashion.
Some read Vedas other the Muslim books
Some wear white other blue
One calls himself Muslim and another calls
himself Hindu

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One desires the paradise of Muslims and the other
heaven of Hindus

Says Nanak he who realizes God's will know the
secret of Lord Master.²

The awareness of inner unity amidst apparent diversity is the cornerstone of inter-faith understanding. This is one of the core messages of *Guru Granth Sahib* that all the religions have different ways to attain spirituality.

Before the dawn of modern civilisation when religious fanaticism ruled supreme, priests of other faiths so called heretics were burnt alive in Europe.³ When Sunni mosques were burnt in Baghdad by Safri Shah Imam⁴, when temples were destroyed⁵ and forcible conversions were the order of the day by the Muslim rulers in India, *Guru Granth Sahib* gave the message of peace and hope by declaring one God is father, we all human beings are his children.⁶ This is the basis of inter-faith understanding.

Guru Arjan, the compiler of the *Adi Granth* took positive steps to bring interfaith understanding. He ushered in a new era of religious understanding by defining religion in the simplest possible terms dispensing with all formalities. His definition of religion consisted of only two things - Love of the Name of God and purity of conduct. It has never been challenged by the follower of any religion so far. He wrote in a hymn of *Guru Granth*:

Of all religions the best is the practice of Name
with purity of conduct

Of all rites the best is to purge one's heart of filth
and evil tendencies by association with those
who have disciplined themselves

Of all devotional practices, the best is the constant
application of the heart to the Name

Of all sacred texts the most-sacred is that in which one
hearts the praise of beloved, utters it to others.

Of all holy places the holiest is where one feels the
stir of the unstruck music in one's heart.⁷

Teja Singh has rightly stated, commenting on above definition :

This was a new orientation of religions which revolutionised the old conception that one's own doxy was orthodoxy and every body else's was hetrodoxy. The Gurus made religion untheological.⁸

Guru Arjan included compositions of certain medieval Bhagats whose views in some matters of detail do not tally with that of the Gurus. The Gurus were strictly monotheistic and had no truck with *Avtar* worship or theory of incarnation. Some of the medieval Bhagats whose verses had been included in the *Guru Granth* rarely rose above the belief in Rama and Krishna or incarnation of God. They are not averse to idol worship. Farid, a Muslim curses himself for not going to mosque five times for offering *namaz* and refers to souls in grave waiting for the day of resurrection which clearly cut across the Guru's belief of transmigration of souls.⁹ These antithetical sayings are given an honoured place in a book which not only holds scriptural position among Sikhs but wields authority equal to that of a Guru whose word is law. The Bhagats may be different from the Gurus in the method of worship but did not differ in their aim, which was to love God and to do good. The various streams that merge in the statements of Sikh Gurus transcend all barriers and boundaries to symbolize a universal human vision. That was only possible with inter-faith understanding for which the Sikh Gurus made pioneering efforts.

According to Teja Singh, 'The Sikh Guru's religion was for the unification of people, who needed a book which should synthesise their beliefs and cultures. The *Holy Granth* is the only inter-communal book in India if not in the world.¹⁰ The *Guru Granth* has thirty six contributors including six Sikh Gurus. It contains the verses of medieval Bhagats belonging to different parts of India viz. Jaidev from Bengal, Namdev from Maharashtra, Kabir and Ravidas from Uttar Pradesh and Dhanna from Rajasthan. Dr. RadhaKrishnan stated, 'a

remarkable feature of the *Guru Granth* is that it contains writings of the religious teachers of Hinduism and Islam.¹¹ There are about half a dozen Muslim saints whose verses have been included in the *Guru Granth*. Prominent among them are Sheikh Farid, Mardana, Satta and Balwand etc.

The *Adi Granth* made unique contribution in bringing the people of different cultures in the main stream of national life. Arnold Toynbee has rightly stated :

‘The Indian and Judaic religions are notoriously different in spirit. Their principle meeting ground has been India, where Islam impinged on Hinduisim violently. On the whole, the story of relations between these two great religions on Indian ground has been unhappy tale of mutual misunderstanding and hostility. To have discovered and embraced the deep harmony underlying the historic Hindu-Muslim discord has been noble spiritual triumph.¹²

There is a dire need of communal understanding keeping in view the constant communal riots in India. The society is honey combed with social exclusiveness and superstitions of diverse kinds, religion could hardly be anything but a formal shapeless system of arid beliefs and lifeless rituals. The spirit of religion is hidden beneath a mass of formalities and extraneous observances. The Sikh Gurus therefore emphasis that true religion consists of love of God and good conduct. Before undertaking his long missionary tours Guru Nanak made a very significant statement viz. ‘There is no Hindu and there is no Mussalman’.¹³ It created a stir among the Muslims officials of the town who argued that Mussalmans were there and they were ruling over the country. On their enquiry Guru Nanak said :

To be a Mussalman is difficult, if one be really so, then one may be called a Mussalman.

Let one first love the religion of saints, and put aside pride and pelf as the fil removeth rust.

Let him accept the religion of his pilots and dismiss anxiety regarding death or life.

Let him heartily obey the Will of God, worship the creator and efface himself.

When he is kind to all men then Nanak, shall he to be indeed a Mussalman.¹⁴

Similarly, to the Hindu, Guru Nanak said :

Religion consisteth not in patched coat or in a Jogis staff or in ashes smeared over the body
Religion consisteth not in earrings worn, or a shaven head or in blowing of horns.

He who looketh on all men as equal is religious
Religion consisteth not in wandering to tombs or places of cremation, or sitting in attitude of contemplation.

Religion consisteth not in wandering in foreign countries or bathing at the places of pilgrimages.

Abide pure amid the impurities of the world, thus shalt thou find the way of religion.¹⁵

Guru Nanak was once questioned by a crowd that surrounded him. The question was whether Hindus were superior or Muslims. His reply was, 'without good acts the professors of both religions shall suffer.'¹⁶ The Guru always emphasised on the good action or good conduct in life whereas his contemporaries believed in formalities and rituals. When directly asked whether he was Hindu or Musalman, his reply was 'I am mere man made of five elements.'¹⁷

Guru Nanak Dev shunned class, caste and creed and vehemently stressed the equality of mankind. He gave highest respect to the divinity of man - '*man tu jot sarup hain*'.¹⁸ Man is the embodiment of God.' In his personal life he preferred sharing food with honest carpenter than enjoying the best dishes offered by feudal lord. To him purity of mind and soul had the best appreciation. He never distinguished between Hindus and Muslims. He had with him a constant companion, a Muslim Bhai Mardana who used to play on *rabab*.¹⁹

The caste system has been described as the 'steel frame' of Hindu society. *Guru Granth Sahib* exhorts his followers to defy the rules of caste-exclusiveness which are the greatest obstacle in the development of inter-faith understanding. The positive steps were taken in this direction. The *Guru Granth* enjoins upon his followers to meet in congregation and partake meals in the common kitchen-viz *langar* where they are to sit together, worship together and eat together irrespective of the fact whether they belong to the higher castes or low castes.

In Hindu society caste and religion had been inseparable since times immemorial. As Banerjee has stated, 'according to Ramajuja, the grace of God is not available for Sudras in this life but by good conduct he may work his way up to birth in a higher caste and then he may be admitted to the privileged group in social and religious matters.'²⁰ No such restriction based on birth are recognised in the *Guru Granth*.

The Sikh Gurus admitted their followers without any distinction of caste and creed rather so called low caste people joined in large numbers even Muslims were freely admitted and honoured. Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru appointed a Muslim named Allayar as a missionary. His name is still preserved among others in the golden plaque at Goindwal, Amritsar.

In this way, the Sikhs Gurus by their hymns in the *Guru Granth* as well as by their actions provided basis for inter-faith understanding. In the history of religion they were precursor who made pioneer efforts in this field.

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Basic Features of Sikhism as a Religion

(With Reference to Jainism)

Mukul Raj Mehta*

Sikhism is one of the latest religions of the world. It has originated on the Indian soil and flourishes for the most part on this soil itself. The rise of Sikhism is seen by many as a protest against both Hinduism and Islam. Guru Nanak, the founder Guru (teacher) of Sikhism is reported to have said, "Neither the *Veda* nor the *Kateb* (the Quran) know the mystery". This statement shows Nanak's dissatisfaction with both Hinduism and Islam and this explains why he thought it necessary to impart new message to people.

Guru Nanak was followed by a chain of nine Gurus, the last of whom was Guru Govind Singh. Sikhism as a religion took shape under the influence and teachings of all these Gurus. It was Guru Govind Singh who initiated in Sikhism the custom of wearing or carrying the five Ks as the distinguishing mark of every Sikh. *Kesh* (long uncut hair), *Kangha* (a comb), *Kara* (iron bracelet), *Kirpan* (sword) and *Kuchch* (shorts).

It has developed some beliefs and practices which are distinctive character as a separate religion. Such basic features are- Sikhism is strictly a monotheistic religion. It is an outcome of the personal experiences of the Sikh Gurus themselves. The oneness of God is emphasized by all of them with one voice. We can see the figure '1' at the very beginning of the Sikh *Mul Mantra*. This signifies the strong Sikh belief in the unity of God.

The oneness of God in Sikhism, however does not refer

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to monism. It rather refers to monotheism. Nanak clearly believed in a personal God whom he has spoken of as creator, sustainer and destroyer. However, there are references in Nanak as well as in other Gurus, such as in Guru Arjun, which characterize God as both *Nirguna* and *Saguna*. As Guru Arjun clearly says, "*Nirguna api Saraguna bhi oh!*". But the point must be clearly understood. In his absolute aspect, when God is not related to world through creation, he is *nirguna* in the sense that he is unconditioned, devoid of ordinary attributes and completely beyond the range of human comprehension. He then, by his own will becomes *saguna* by revealing himself in the form of the world. As is said, "From this absolute condition, He, the Pure One, became manifest, from *nirguna* He became *saguna*."¹ He is not comprehensible by human mind. He can be described only in negative terms, such as, *Agam* (unfathomable), *Agochar* (inscrutable), *Anant* (infinite), *Apar* (boundless), *Alakh* (imperceptible), *Akath* (ineffable) and so on. Sikhism, however, does not believe in God's incarnation, and here it is nearer to Islam and Jainism than to Hinduism. The one and only one supreme God is regarded as Creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. Reference to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are there in Sikhism, but these all are regarded as creations of God himself and they have got no independent status of their own.

Creation is the result of divine self-revelation. God has revealed or manifested himself in the form of the world. But his being is not exhausted in this world alone. He goes beyond it. The entire world is the product of the divine will or divine order (*Hukam*). All forms and colors of the world are from God and from nowhere else. "By Thy *Hukam* Thy didst create all forms."² The world is the revelation or manifestation of God. God is thus both immanent and transcendent. As the inner dweller of the world, He is immanent, but as eternally existing from before creation and as creator of the world, He is also transcendent to it. The cosmogony of Sikhism is set out in *Maru Solahe* says Guru Nanak, "For countless aeons there

was undivided darkness. 'There was neither heavens nor earth but only the infinite order of God (*Hukam*).'³ Sometimes the world is described as *maya* by the Sikh Gurus. This gives an impression that Sikhism takes this world as unreal. But this is not true. *Maya* denotes here nothing more than the phenomenon of constant change. It does not say that the world is unreal, but simply that the world is constantly changing.

Creation is fully real. Because God is real and the world is the expression of God, Sikhism does not take this world as a place from where one should always try to escape. Creation, according to Sikhism, has a definite purpose. It will be revealed to man only when he will destroy his ego (*Haumai*) and attain his real nature. Creation having a purpose does not imply that by creating the world, God has any need to fulfil. God is all-perfect and He has no need of his own. Sikhism believes in the greatness of man as he has a divine element in him in the form of his '*mana*' or *atman*. He has perverted his true nature by being engrossed in what is known as "*Haumai*" (Self-centeredness or egoism). Man in his true nature is given very high position in Sikhism. He is rather the highest being in creation. Life and consciousness are found in various degrees in the various living beings of the world, but they are found in the most developed form in man. "Man is blessed with the light of reason and discrimination."⁴ He seems to be the most privileged creature of God. "You have been given a human body: this is your opportunity to meet God."⁵ Outwardly, man seems simply to be a body, but in his inner essence, he has a *mana* (*manas* or *atman*). This *mana* or *atman* in man is the divine element in him.

Man as he stands in the world in his present state is in a degenerate condition, separated from his original divine source through the veil of delusion, pride, egoism, etc. which are briefly included under impure by the attachment of five evil passions—*kama* (lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (covetousness), *moha* (attachment to the worldly objects) and *ahankaara* (pride). Here we are reminded of Jainism ("*ragadveshadivi-*

karah jayateetijinah, jineva upasyade-vataasyeti Jainah”). A man who is slave to the above passions is known as ‘*Manmukha*’ (self-centered) in Sikhism. The opposite of *Manmukha* is taken as *Gurmukha* (centered to or inclined towards the Guru). One who obeys the Guru and acts under his guidance, is released from the present state of imperfection. Nanak says, “*Mana jitai Jag Jitai*.”⁶ (to conquer the *mana* is to conquer the world). This means that one who purges his *mana* of the five evils mentioned above and makes it pure becomes released. How close is this thought to the Jaina concept of *Bahiratma*, *Antaratma* and *Paramatma*. The atman or self is, therefore, to be purged of the evil passions, the ‘*Haumai*’, so that it can be purified. Suffering is all due to ignorance. It is not a constituent feature of the world. It is all due to the wrong way of looking at the world. Attachment to the world is an illusion and it is this which is the cause of all suffering. Under the spell of ignorance, we are attached with the various passions and cling to worldly objects. All human suffering is due to egoism or self-centeredness (*Haumai*). The moment it is given up, suffering ends.

Sikhism has firm belief in *Karma* and transmigration. ‘As one sows, so he reaps’ - is the firm faith equally of, Hinduism and Jainism. It firmly believes in the doctrine of *Karma* and rebirth. The *mana* or the *atman* of man is immortal and after the death of the body it assumes another fresh body in accordance with its past *Karmas*. “*Karma* determines the nature of our birth.”⁷ Here Sikhism is similar to Jainism regarding the concept of *Karma*, but Jainism does not believe in a *mana* as spiritual element like *atman*.

The ultimate destiny of man according to Sikhism is to be free from the chain of birth and death and be reunited with God. Negatively, salvation means freedom from the cycle of birth and death, and positively, it means reunion with God. The trouble over the real meaning of the word ‘union’ or ‘unity’ with God may very well be exemplified by the following passage from Nanak himself, in which likeness with

God and blending with God are both taken as the final destiny of man :

“He who is immersed in His love day and night knows Him immanent in the three worlds and throughout all time. He becomes like Him whom he knows. He becomes wholly pure, his body is sanctified and God dwell in his heart as his only love. Within him is the word; he is blended in the True one.”⁸

However, the frequent use of word ‘*Samana*’ or ‘*Samaund*’ by Nanak, which means ‘blending’ or ‘entering into’ for characterizing the nature of ultimate union, testifies to his belief in the complete merger of individual soul into God, of *atma* into *parmatma*, to be the ultimate destiny of man. Without the help of a Guru, release is not possible in Sikhism. Release is of course possible by winning the grace of God through devotion to God and through *Nama Simaran*, but these latter are themselves not possible without the guiding and grace of a Guru . Without the Guru, there can be no *bhakti*, no love; without the Guru, there is no access to the company of the *sant* (saint); without the Guru one blindly engages in futile endeavor. But with the Guru, one’s *mana* is purified.⁹ It is like in Jainism , the *Namokar Mantra* purifies the heart of a *Sadhak* .

Amongst other things, performance of righteous actions, *nama simaran* (Repeating the name of God), *bhajan* and *kirtan* (corporate singing of the praise of God), etc. are taken as means to liberation. But in spite of all efforts, liberation is not possible without God’s grace and the helping hand of a Guru. Jainism do believe in the helping hand of a Guru , but does not believe either in the God or in the grace of God . The importance of Guru as a spiritual guide is much emphasized in Sikhism as well as in Jainism . As a religious discipline, Sikhism and Jainism , both have much emphasized on the inner purity of mind and heart and denounces all sorts of externalism. *Nama simaran* and *kirtan* etc. are also of no consequence if they are mere mechanical repetitions. The Sikh

discipline mainly consists in cleansing the *mana* or the *atman* of the evil passions, but in every such devotional act, inwardness of heart and purity of *mana* are emphasized. In Jainism also, '*bhavana*' has been given much importance. Sikhism is opposed to anything that is mere external ritualism. "If the *mana* is unclean, how can it be purified by worshipping stones, visiting places of pilgrimage, living in jungles, wandering around as an ascetic?"¹⁰ Thus idolatry, asceticism, pilgrimage etc., are all ridiculed by Sikhism. It is a religion of inward discipline, and not external, hypocritical practices. It is strictly opposed to hypocrisy. There is no use of visiting places of pilgrimage. The true *tirath* (place of pilgrimage) is within. True religion is inward and finds shape in loving devotion. All else is mere hypocrisy which has no place in religion.

Besides *nama simran* and devotional singing of songs in praise of God, a dedicated moral and virtuous life, a life of the selfless service of the people, company of God-centered men, etc. are also emphasized in Sikhism as ways leading to final release. As ethical virtues, the most emphasized one are humility and love. Besides, the virtues of contentment, truth, righteousness, mercy, compassion, purity etc. are all given due importance. Sikhism is vehemently opposed to casteism and it preaches love to all without any distinction of caste or creed. Jainism also like Sikhism, is opposed to casteism. It strongly denounces the Hindu casts system. So we find so many similarities as well as a few differences on some points between both the religions, Sikhism and Jainism.¹¹

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***Guru Granth Sahib* and Holy Bible : An Interfaith Dialogue**

H.S.Virk*

To achieve the objective of interfaith dialogue in the present day world, it is imperative to study the holy books or scriptures of different religions. Unless we find some common ground or meeting point, there will be no interfaith dialogue which can lead to world peace. The author had the chance to study the holy Bible (Old and New Testament) in 1971 and made an attempt to derive some interesting results after a comparative study of holy *Guru Granth Sahib*.

There are many points of difference in the compilation of holy books of Sikhs and Christians. The Bible was written after the demise of Jesus Christ and it had many versions whereas the *Guru Granth* was compiled by Guru Arjan himself and its authentic version was enshrined as 'Sabad Guru' of the Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh in 1708.

The Sikh tradition of inter-religious dialogue originated with Guru Nanak himself, the first Prophet of Sikh religion, who during his journeys (*udasis*) in the Indian sub-continent and beyond discoursed with his contemporary saints and *Sufis*, scholastic exponents and practitioners of other faiths. The essence of this discourse with the *Sidhas* (Nath Yogis) is expressed in his well-known composition, *Sidhgoshti*. Guru Nanak also held interfaith dialogue with Hindu and Muslim faith leaders.

Inter-comparison of Sikh Scripture and the holy Bible

Bible : I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. To this end was I born,

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and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

Guru Granth : ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈਂ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ

ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ॥ (p. 722)

Bible : Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
Neither let the mighty man glory in his might,
Let not the rich man glory in his riches.

Guru Granth : ਧਨ ਭੂਮਿ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਕਰੈ ਗੁਮਾਨੁ॥

ਸੋ ਮੂਰਖੁ ਅੰਧਾ ਅਗਿਆਨੁ॥...

ਸਭ ਤੇ ਆਪ ਜਾਨੈ ਬਲਵੰਤੁ॥

ਖਿਨ ਮਹਿ ਹੋਇ ਜਾਇ ਭਸਮੰਤੁ॥...

ਜਿਸ ਕੈ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਰਾਜ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ॥

ਸੋ ਨਰਕਪਾਤੀ ਹੋਵਤ ਸੁਆਨੁ॥

ਜਬ ਇਹ ਜਾਨੈ ਮੈ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਰਤਾ॥

ਤਬ ਲਗੁ ਗਰਭ ਜੋਨਿ ਮਹਿ ਫਿਰਤਾ॥ (p. 278)

Bible : Everyman is brutish in his knowledge.

Guru Granth : ਲਿਖਿ ਲਿਖਿ ਪੜਿਆ॥ ਤੇਤਾ ਕੜਿਆ॥

ਪੜਿਆ ਮੂਰਖ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਸ ਲਬੁ ਲੋਭੁ ਅਹੰਕਾਰ॥ (p. 140)

Bible : When he uttered his voice, there is a multitude
of waters in the heavens and He causeth vapours
to ascend.

Guru Granth : ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ॥

ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ॥ (p.3)

Bible : Render unto Ceaser the things which be
Ceaser's and unto God the things which
be God's.

Dasam Granth : ਬਾਬੇ ਕੇ ਬਾਬਰ ਕੇ ਦੋਹੂ॥ ਆਪ ਕਰੇ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਸੋਹੂ॥
Miri & Piri, i.e. spiritual and temporal spheres
overlap in Sikhism..

Bible : Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat
or drink. Is not the life more than meat?

Guru Granth : ਕਾਹੇ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਚਿਤਵਹਿ ਉਦਮੁ॥

ਜਾ ਆਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਪਰਿਆ॥

ਸੈਲ ਪਥਰ ਮਹਿ ਜੰਤ ਉਪਾਏ

ਤਾ ਕਾ ਰਿਜਕ ਆਗੈ ਕਰਿ ਧਰਿਆ॥ (p. 10)

Bible: Cleanliness of body is of no avail but purity of heart.

Guru Granth : ਤੀਰਥ ਨਾਤਾ ਕਿਆ ਕਰੈ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਮੈਲੁ ਗੁਮਾਨੁ॥ (p. 61)

Bible: Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Guru Granth : ਰਾਮ ਰਾਮ ਸਕ ਕੋ ਕਹੈ ਕਹੀਐ ਰਾਮੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਰਾਮ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਤਾ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਵੈ ਕੋਇ॥

(p. 491)

Bible: Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it.

Guru Granth : ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ॥

ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ॥

ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ॥

ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਚੈ॥

(p.1412)

Guru Gobind Singh also ordained his Sikhs (of Khalsa order) to offer their heads before the Guru.

Bible: A camel may pass through the eye of a needle but it is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Guru Granth : ਮਾਇਆਧਾਰੀ ਅਤਿ ਅੰਨਾ ਬੋਲਾ॥

ਸਬਦੁ ਨ ਸੁਣਈ ਬਹੁ ਰੋਲ ਘਚੋਲਾ॥

(p.313)

Bible: Faith is stronger than law.

Guru Granth : ਛੋਡੀਲੇ ਪਾਖੰਡਾ॥ ਨਾਮਿ ਲਇਐ ਜਾਹਿ ਤਰੰਦਾ॥ (p. 471)

Bible: Beware lest anyman spoil you through philosophy.

Guru Granth : ਜਗੁ ਕਊਆ ਮੁਖਿ ਚੁੰਚ ਗਿਆਨੁ॥

Bible: Intreat the elder woman as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

Bhai Gurdas : ਦੇਖ ਪਰਾਈਆਂ ਚੰਗੀਆਂ ਮਾਵਾਂ ਭੈਣਾਂ ਧੀਆਂ ਜਾਣੈ ॥
(29/11)

Bible : Body of Christ is his true disciple.

Rahitnama : ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ। ਖਾਲਸੇ ਮਹਿ ਹੋ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ।

Bible: He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Dasam Granth : ਜਿਨਿ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੀਉ ਤਿਨਿ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਪਾਇਉ।

Bible: Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist and of John from Heaven.

Guru Granth : ਅਲਖ ਅਪਾਰ ਅਗੰਮ ਅਗੋਚਰ
ਨਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਕਾਲੁ ਨ ਕਰਨਾ ॥
ਅਪਰੰਪਰ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ
ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸੋਈ ਜੀਉ ॥ (p. 599)
This is a preliminary study of holy books of the Sikhs and Christians for Inter-Faith dialogue.

Some Points of difference:

- Bible: (i) Man ought indeed not to cover his head when praying for he is image and glory of the God: But the woman is the glory of man.
(ii) It is a shame for women to speak in the church.
(iii) Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
(iv) As Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in all matters.

Guru Granth : ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨਾ॥ (p. 473)

Bible: It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby the brother stumbled, or is offended, or is made weak.

- Bible: (i) Put up the sword in its place: For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.
(ii) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Zafarnama : ਚੂੰ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ ਹਮਾ ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰ ਗੁਜ਼ਸ਼ਤ ॥
ਹਲਾਲ ਅਸਤ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਬ-ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੀਰ ਦਸਤ ॥ (p. 22)

Sikh Attitude toward Religious Pluralism

Dharam Singh*

I

Religious pluralism as a fact of human existence is as old as the religious history of mankind. In spite of this we can still call it a newly experienced reality because in the past people lived secure in their own tiny and isolated religious camps, least concerned with the issue of plurality of religions and the allied theological and social problems, but today the world has become physically one, a global village. In this practical situation, man cannot run away from or wish away the social reality of religious pluralism and the social and theological issues arising from it. In the modern-day world, man is destined to live in a religiously and culturally pluralistic society: We must realize that "the religious life of mankind from now on, if it is to be lived at all, will be lived in a context of religious pluralism....This is true for all of us."¹ Therefore, the present situation should be the concern of all religions.²

For a harmonious co-existence in such a plural social structure, it is necessary that we give up our earlier exclusivist³ view of religion. The pluralistic view of religion seems the only way-out to make different faith-communities live harmoniously and peacefully. This view implies that all religions are equally true and valid. The one-way road is most likely the road to destruction: perhaps this is the abiding meaning of the story of the Tower of Babel : the Lord God warned against the havoc inherent in all dreams or projects for a monolithic, one way vision of reality.⁴ This is somewhat akin to the message con-

tained in a hymn included in the Sikh scripture wherein all religious paths have been declared valid and wherein a prayer is made to God to save the world whatever the way. All religions share something common: they make common reference to a single, transcendent reality.⁵ Still they have genuine differences, for each religion is a different historical manifestation of that reality and it presents visions of God, world and humanity from a localized, historically particular perspective. In other words, it can be said that essence of the Divine revelation is universal but when shared by the receiver-prophet with mankind in a mundane language in a specific historico-religious-cultural context, it acquires limitations as well as differentiation. Pluralism accepts this fact of the overlapping encounter of individual traditions with the one reality. It accepts the doctrinal statements of different traditions as referring to "religious reality, but they are presumed...not to describe that reality truly, in [full] detail and with any certainty, since no one can do that."⁶

Pluralism takes the many religions the world over as historical manifestations of one ultimate supreme reality. God is one and infinite, but all diverse historical religions are, by definition, finite and particular. Hence, differences among the varied religions become inevitable, but this only goes to reveal the richness of the eternal and infinite truth. Different religions of the world have also been compared by a theologian to the branches of a tree: these branches are different but have the same source for their sustenance. To extend the simile further, we can also call all humans as leaves on these branches, which apparently look different, but are nourished by the same one source. However, this in no way diminishes the significance or value of a particular religion vis-à-vis any other. It is just like the sciences which study the natural world: they do not claim monopoly of wisdom for a particular branch of study nor do they quarrel about the superiority of one science over the other. One must try to understand and appreciate the religious beliefs and practices of one's neighbour. No doubt, one cannot put his

faith in parenthesis while trying to understand and examine the faith of the other, yet one must listen attentively to the faith of the other as this is unfolded by the believer himself, without pre-judging that faith and without abandoning one's own commitment. This is a very delicate task as a theologian had stated about half a century back :

Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival.⁷

Religious pluralism cannot be confined just to the knowledge of other religious systems and their doctrines and teachings. It would have meant confronting a religious truth in the abstract. On the other hand, it also includes in the area of its study a knowledge of the persons belonging to other religions. Various factors have transformed the world into a global village – physically at least, but we still prefer to live in our own small religious worlds. We have become neighbours with people of different races and religions, but we still prefer to consider and call them alien. Man can lead a meaningful and fuller life only if he works out a more dialogical relationship with his neighbours who may not necessarily be of his own race or colour or his own religious persuasion. People of one faith-community are not on average noticeably either better or worse human beings than those of others.

The truth-claims of all religions are also equally valid and true. Major streams of religious experience and thought embody different awareness of the same ultimate reality. "God's voice speaks in many languages, communicating itself in a diversity of intuitions. The word of God never comes to an end. No word is God's last word",⁸ says a Christian theologian. Diverse human religious expressions are only a multi-coloured spectrum of the Invisible Light. In other words, truth is many-sided, but our knowledge of it is fragmentary. Still we hold on to our fragment to be the whole, to our convictions to be the only

truth. We must instead realize that religions other than our own are also revelations of what is true. As Smith has put it, "it is not morally possible actually to go out into the world and say to devout, intelligent, fellow human beings: 'We are saved and you are damned'; or, 'We believe that we know God, and we are right; you believe that you know God, and you are totally wrong.'"⁹ This fact implies an attitude of love, tolerance and acceptance towards other religions and other faith-communities.

II

If India encountered religious pluralism as a social reality since ancient past, it became a social reality in the West only in the 19th and the 20th centuries. No doubt, the early Christian missionaries treated non-Christians as pagans and maintained an attitude of feigned superiority. Fortunately, the Christian West is now seized of the issue and they are endeavoring to meet the challenge by reinterpreting and restating their theology. The Christian West has since realized that Christendom is part of a much larger human world and that Christianity is not the only but one among world religions. Second, changing patterns of mobility shattered older perceptions of the religions as confined, culturally and geographically, within particular boundaries. Third, there has during past about one century been an explosion of information about religions of the world, thus replacing the earlier ill-informed and hostile Western stereotypes of other faith communities with more accurate knowledge and sympathetic understanding.¹⁰ These and such other reasons brought about a realization among Christian theologians that other religions also deserve appreciation, but some of them still tend to stop at inclusivism.

In Islam there is also an attitude that considers other religions as "deviations from the one primordial religion, of which Islam is the full revelation."¹¹ And being the full revelation, it became the norm of all religions. Such a view forecloses the need for study and understanding of other

religions on their own terms. This theological approach went well until the end of medieval period when Islam remained self-enclosed in Muslim-dominated states. The inflow of knowledge about other religions and the fact of Muslims now finding themselves in the so far unfamiliar position of a minority group in an alien host culture have brought about a change in their outlook and they have begun to study and understand other religions on their terms.

Christianity and Islam were, no doubt, the only two missionary traditions, especially in the Indian context. Others did preach their own faiths but they did not aim at converting people from other faith-communities to their own. Hinduism in Indian context enjoys a unique position insofar as it is theoretically pluralist but practically it prefers to assimilate religions of Indian origin unto itself, without conceding an independent status to any of them. Of late, this missionary consciousness has much widened, and today, Hinduism and Buddhism are also putting equally energetic efforts to put their faiths on the international scenario. And, the job of mission requires putting forward the superiority claims of one's religion vis-a-vis those of others.

Man has to realize that there can be no one way to the realization of God, rather there can be many ways and many Saviours to help him on this path. And, these many ways cannot exist in isolation of one another, nor can they possibly remain intolerant or indifferent toward the others. The neighbour can no longer remain a stranger. It is necessary for different religions to meet each other and relate to each other, the objective being not to absorb or obliterate the other but to help and learn from each other. This has become obligatory for man today because pluralism is no more just a text-book issue but has become a human existential problem.

III

Sikh religion can in the present circumstances play a very crucial and constructive role because it evolved a pluralist

theology wherein is stressed the primacy of the ethical thematics and active interference in, rather than passive acceptance of and respect for the given inter-religious situation. This interference, however, is for looking at the merits and demerits of each religion from the point of view of truth and the subaltern masses. For it criticizes not the Vedas but the Vedic tradition which classifies humans into different *varnas* or castes. It is also critical of religions that mobilize mass support in the name of religion to serve the interests of the contemporary ruling political class. It does not want to let religion become an instrument of political dominance, rather wants to turn it into a weapon in the hands of the suffering people against the unjust oppressor.

The lives of the Sikh spiritual preceptors, the message of the Sikh scripture, and the Sikh tradition and history stand witness to the constructive and positive Sikh response to such situations. For example, if we look at the life of the founder of the faith, we learn that after he received the revelation, he took on four preaching odysseys in four different directions to share the divine message with the people at large. He seems to have made it a point to visit any place of pilgrimage or otherwise important to both Hindus and Muslims. At such places, he would call on the holy men who might be putting up there and have a spiritual discourse with them. He would listen to them and also share with them the revelation he had had. The Sikh tradition does not speak of any polemic but instead recommends a meaningful and constructive dialogue in which one must listen to the other's viewpoint and then make out his own argument. Such a dialogical relationship with other faiths can help us understand and appreciate other religions in a better way.

The Sikh scripture stands for respect for all religions, tolerance for religious pluralism, and understanding and co-operation among different faith-communities. It is quite explicit in its statement that revelation cannot be religion-specific, region-specific or caste-specific¹² and that the claim to truth cannot be a monopoly of any one particular religion, caste,

class or region. Since each expression of revelation is an attempt at looking at and understanding the Real One in a particular localized context, we must respect other religions notwithstanding our disagreements and differentiations in regard to outward symbols and rituals. The Sikh scripture is a concrete example to support this view.

Lest this understanding and appreciation of other religions should remain an abstract idea, Sikhism favours a dialogical relationship between different faith communities. The Sikh scripture is quite emphatic in stating that man throughout his worldly existence should continue to maintain dialogue because that is the only way at reaching the truth. Guru Nanak in one of his hymns says – *jab lag dunia rahiai Nanak kichhu suniai kichhu kahiai*.¹³ Let it also be clarified that the idea of *kichhu suniai* and *kichhu kahiai* implies fruitful dialogue aimed at searching the truth. The Sikh scripture categorically rejects polemic, rather it says that it is only after polemic is put to an end that the real research for truth begins and gets accomplished – *khoji upjai badi binasai hau bali bali gur kartara*.¹⁴ Whereas polemic causes - and is also caused by – ego which in the Sikh scripture is referred to as a “serious malady,” humility which is a necessary prerequisite to listen to the other’s viewpoint is the essence of all virtues. Thus, the message of the scripture is to cultivate humility and listen to the viewpoint of the others and share one’s own views so that one can reach the truth.

No doubt, dialogue – with self as well as with others – is given much importance in the Sikh scripture, but it is not a mere mental or academic exercise. It goes a step farther in asking man to live that truth in social life. Guru Angad in one of his hymns advises man to reflect on Name Divine for one *pahar* (watch) but for the remaining seven watches of the day, this divine message be lived in practical social life. Thus, the Sikh advice is first to have dialogue to learn truth and then live that truth in practical social life.

The message of religious tolerance and acceptance of religious pluralism as contained in the Gurus' utterances included in the scripture is lived in the lives of the Gurus and in the Sikh tradition in general. This gets confirmed by the fact that Guru Nanak was held in equal reverence both by the Hindus and Muslims, apart from Sikhs. The fact of Guru Arjan gathering both Hindus and Muslims around him is acknowledged by Emperor Jahangir himself. Guru Tegh Bahadur gave away his life so as to protect the religious freedom of man. Apparently, he offered himself for sacrifice to stop the forcible conversion of Hindus by the fanatic Muslim ruler of the day. However, his sacrifice is for the religious freedom of man and he would have laid down his life for the protection of religious symbols of Muslims had the situation so demanded. In Guru Gobind Singh's fight against the deceit and decadence of Hindu Rajput chiefs and the Mughal oppression, there were many Hindus and Muslims on the Guru's side. Among the Sikhs, Bhai Kanahaiya is the best example of a Sikh seeing the same divine essence behind the varied religious denominations of wounded soldiers in the battle-field of Anandpur.

Treating all human beings as spiritually one and ethnically equal notwithstanding their different religious backgrounds is the pre-requisite for maintaining harmonious relationship between different faith-communities. This is the need of the hour, and this is what Sikhism stands for.

References

1. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Faith of Other Men* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) p. 11.
2. Paul Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions* (New York: Orbis, 1995), p. 21.
3. For an understanding and detailed discussion on these terms (exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist), see Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (London:SCM), 1983. This phraseology was used by Alan Race for the first time and it was supported by

John Hick (*The Rainbow of Faiths* (London :SCM, 1985) and Gavi D'Costa (*New Blackfriars*) but Ian Markhan criticized it.

4. Paul Knitter, *No Other Name :A Critical Survey of Christian Attitude Toward the World Religions* (London :SCM,1985), p. 6.
5. This is a general statement. A caveat to this claim must be entered in the case of certain traditions (e.g. the *sramanic* Indian traditions) which tend to deny the existence of positive reality denoted by words for the sacred.
6. Peter Byrne, *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism: Reference and Realism in Religion* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd.), p. 202.
7. M.A.C. Warren, *General Introduction to the "Christian Presence" Series* (London: SCM Press,1959), ff.
8. Abraham Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays in Applied Religion*, New York:Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966, p. 182.
9. *The Faith of Other Men*, pp. 130-31
10. For details as to the causes that brought about this awareness, see John Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths* , pp. 12-13
11. Harold Coward. *Pluralism in the World Religions* (Oxford: Oneword Publications, 2000), p. 81
12. It is not religion-specific because the hymns of holy men coming from Hindu as well as Muslim traditions are accepted of equal spiritual merit along with those of the Gurus; it is not region specific as we find these contributors to the sikh scripture coming from far off regions; it is not caste-specific as we find that most of the holy men coming from Hindu tradition belong to different castes especially the so-called lower castes.
13. *Ibid.*, I, p. 661
14. *Ibid.*, II, p. 1255

Guru Nanak and Yogic Tradition

Sukhninder Kaur Dhillon*

Guru Nanak's religious philosophy differs from the fundamentals of world religions. The religion of Guru Nanak was based on monotheism, humanism and universal spiritualism.¹ Guru Nanak lived with people and worked for the people. He gave a practicable, convincing and realistic philosophy to the people.² Guru Nanak sowed the seeds of spiritual democracy. So there is wider scope for interfaith dialogues with any religion.

The Nath and Kanphata yogis held sway in the country during medieval times. The followers of Gorakhnatha are known as Gorakhnathis or Kanphata (split eared) Yogis. Yogis are closely connected with Shaivism and its principal orders were Aghora Panthis and Nathapanthis. The followers of Gorakhnath admitted members and females of all castes. The Yogis who have attained last stage of initiation were called Kanphatas, while others were called Augharas. In the last stage of initiation ear-lobes were pierced with Bhāirevi knife and large rings (Mundran) were worn by the Yogi. Kanphata Yogis used Nath with their names as suffixed and greeted one another with epithet Adesa and used a kind of blowing horn called Singi.

The term 'Yoga' is derived from Sanskrit root 'Yuj' 'mean to unite to bind together, to hold fast and to control.'³ The word Yoga is control of senses and self-discipline. It also denotes the ascetic techniques of meditation. Term Yoga is understood as the union of human soul with god.⁴ Yoga implies both, the

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goal of life and path leading to the goal.⁵ Pantanjali describe Yoga as 'the cession of the fluctuation of the mind.'⁶ No doubt Yoga is religious faith leads to personal realization of truth.

In medieval times Yoga became popular in northern India and especially in Punjab. Yoga turns faith into a practical affair and was associated with '*mantra-sadhana*' of '*tantra*' and thus it become very attractive and popular in the medieval society. In all sects of Hinduism, Yoga and Dhayana have found important place as they help in the attainment of Union with God.⁷ It is said that the Yogic practices required guru and concentration of thought on single point or object. This concentration called '*ekagarta*' attained through Yoga cuts off the profane consciousness.⁸ After concentration the Yogi is to repeat the *mantras* (Japa).⁹ Patanjali mentions, Yogic techniques required for various moral and spiritual exercises called '*Yoganagas*' for higher concentration are Samadhi.

Various forms of Yoga like Gianyoga, Bhaktiyoga, Karmayoga, Rajyoga, Mantrayoga, and Hathayoga are described by Guru Nanak in his composition. Pantajali regards Rajyoga as distinguished from other types of Yoga because it deals with the control of mind for the enlightenment of the inner spirit. It also stresses ethico-religious training which consists of two sets of practices, namely, moral restraints (Yama) and religious observances (Niyam)¹⁰.

Mantra Yoga and HathaYoga with its association of Tantrism became popular in Punjab and some texts exclusively refer to such Yogic practices in Punjab.¹¹ Mantrayoga stresses the union of Shiva and Shakti, so that a complete communism with the control of body, through it, also involves the control of mind.¹² According to one of the tradition, Hathyoga means the union (Yoga), through force (Hatha). This union is said to be a union of Ila and Pingla Nadi of an individual soul with the Supreme Soul.¹³ Hathayoga involves mastery over the psycho-physical mechanism. During Hathyoga the mind and the body is controlled and the inward spirit shines out and the higher self is realized.¹⁴

During Medieval period Kanphata Yogis and Siddhas practicing Hathayoga and Mantrayoga become very popular in Punjab. Hathayoga is specially associated with Siddh-Nath traditions. Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath were Hathayogis and were very popular in Punjab during Guru Nanak's times, as said earlier. References to Sannyasis in contemporary and later literature are found throughout the medieval literature. Ganesdas refers to famous Sannyasis in Shamasabad, Pasrur, Gujrat and in Pannuke and Kharat in Rachna Doab.¹⁵ Sujan Rai also mentions numerous categories of Sannyasis which were extremely ascetically in the practices, underwent hard penance and shunned the pleasure of the senses.¹⁶ G.S. Ghurya mentions one school of Sannyasis with ten orders known as 'Dasnamis.'¹⁷ Sannyasis wore generally ochre colored garments and some of them walked naked, some walked with 'Tiger's or Panther's skin on their shoulders. Guru Nanak refers to these Sannyasis and their superfluous rituals in his composition. The Siddhas considered their creed higher than the creeds of the six schools of Philosophy, Jainism and Buddhism; because the Vedantists, following hard reasoning are enveloped in their Mayawad, Bhatta Mimansakas are following in their doctrine of 'fruit of actions' the Vaisesikas believe in duality, the Sankhyas, Vaishnavas, the followers of Vedas; Buddhist and Janis are wasting their time in making their bodies undergo various penances. Again learned Pandits engaged in 'Havens' naked ascetics and poor seeker of merit by going sacred places, groaning under the load of pain have not been able to find the Reality, therefore, it is proper to follow the Siddha Marga i.e. the Natha Marga.¹⁸ The word Natha means protector, patron, lord, master etc. Natha is an epithet given to an ascetic.¹⁹ To win the devotion of their followers they also practiced various disciplines of Hatha Yoga and several kinds of '*tantras*'.²⁰

Siddhas and Nathas traced their origin from Adi-Nath (Shiva) who had two disciples – Machhindra Nath and Jalandhar Nath. Machhindra Nath was the guru of Gorakhnath,

Charpat Nath, Reva Nath, Meen Nath. Gorakh Nath had five disciples i.e. Gehui Nath, Nag Nath, Bharthari Nath, Manik Nath, Bilashya Nath. It is said that Gorakh Nath was the founder of Kanphata Yogis or split eared sect of the Yogis.²¹ Machindra Nath was the founder of Kaul Gian sect in medieval time but this sect claims its existence since the world began.²²

The names of Gorakh, Matsyndra (Machindra), Charpat and Loharipa are found in *Guru Granth*.²³ As said earlier, Matsyndranath was the guru of Gorakh Nath , and Gorakh Nath was the Guru of Charpat and Loharipa. Machindra, Charpat and Loharipa held discussion with Guru Nanak. In Ramkali Ki Var there are five names of Yogis such as Isar, Gorakh Nath, Gopi Chand, Charpat and Bharthari who were yogis of different orders like Girhi (house- holder), Avdhuti (Ascetic), Udasi, Pankhanadi and Vairagi.²⁵ Guru Nanak condemned all these Yogis, especially the Pankhanadis or Vamcharis who believe in Chakra Puja or circle worship.²⁶ Guru Nanak's dialogues with the Siddhas are elaborated in Siddha Goshti saying that contemplation alone does not help so long as we do not practise the Guru Sabad. Through practice of Sabad alone in iron shaped world, one can enjoy.²⁷

Guru Nanak during his dialogues with the Sidhas, says " who practices a *guru sabad* knows the One alone pervading all and the True World abides within their hearts." Guru Nanak further says that the Yogi who is not (Kindled) with Lord's love and does not taste this essence in real sense. He who does not know *guru sabad* is consumed by his inner fire and cannot become chaste. Guru Nanak stressed upon Guru Sabad which is helpfull in getting rid of ignorance and in attainment of Mahasukh and Mukti.

In the beginning of Siddh Gosti the importance of Para-Sabad is stressed without which Mukti is not possible.²⁸ Guru Nanak in his dialogues with the Siddhas says "without surrender before 'Sabad' one cannot cross the world ocean and cravings of mind can not be stilled . Yogis enjoyed *hath*

mudra but Guru Nanak says that deep rooted internal Sabad is the continuous *mudra* which shatters ego and attachment. ²⁹ Guru Nanak stressed on Shabad because it unifies the man from within. Merger in true word and attainment of highest state of Bliss is only possible with true Guru.

According to Siddha cosmogony, Para-siva is the Supreme Reality. Siddha scriptures mentions the supreme Reality itself is under the influence of ignorance created by Shakti. ³⁰ Guru Nanak laid stress on two things in his discourses with the Siddhas. One is that the Siddhas instead of going to high mountains, caves and thick forest should live amongst the common folk and give them right guidance. Secondly they should not condemn householders on whom they had to depend for alms for their survival. Guru Nanak also condemned the use of miraculous powers to cure the ailments and for long life. He also dissuaded them from the use of intoxicants as a help for concentration.

A large number of hymns are addressed to Yogis in Nanak Bani. About 73 stanzas are recorded in *Guru Granth Sahib*, highlight the dialogue between the Siddhas and Guru Nanak. In *Guru Granth Sahib*, some of the hymns are addressed to Avdhus (Avadhutas), Rawals and Yogis in which uselessness of only sticking to outer symbols, craze for supernatural powers and long life is mentioned. The 28th and 31st *pauris* of Japji Sahib deal with this subject and express the preferences for the Nam than to the pursuits of Siddhis. In the Rag Asa, three hymns are addressed to Bharthari, which has been already mentioned, reflect the true picture of sectarian dialogues between the Guru Nanak and the Siddhas. Thus, in Siddha Gosti a detailed exposition of Guru Nanak's views, on the prevalent forms of asceticism and mendicancy to bring out the barren and negative features of their practices which benefit no one in society, are recorded in the form of inter-faith dialogue.

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Acceptability of Nanakian Philosophy in the Science Age

Devinder Singh Chahal*

Sikhi (Sikhism) is scientific and logical religion founded by Guru Nanak during the 15th century when science was emerging as a very important subject in Europe that challenged many religious concepts. Sikhism is based on the philosophy of Guru Nanak that was preached by the Sikh Gurus who succeeded to the House of Nanak. Although the Sikh theologians keep science and Nanakian philosophy far apart from each other, nevertheless, Nanakian philosophy is based on science and logic and many verses from *Gurbani* can be quoted to support this thesis. Nanakian philosophy can become universally acceptable philosophy in the Science Age if it is preached scientifically and logically.

Introduction

Sikhi (Sikhism) is scientific and logical religion founded by Guru Nanak during the 15th century when science was emerging as a very important subject in Europe that challenged many religious concepts. The scientists started to challenge the wrong religious concepts in Christianity. On the other hand not even a single principle of Nanakian philosophy has been ever challenged by any scientist or any scholar so far. Now what is happening in Sikhism is exactly contrary to that what happened in Christianity. During the period of renaissance the scientists were trying to correct the wrong concepts introduced into the Christianity while in Sikhism during the 18th and 19th centuries the scholars were re-

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introducing myths and rituals that were condemned and rejected by Guru Nanak. Since then Sikhism is continuously being wrapped in a cocoon woven with ancient mythology, unscientific and illogical codes and rituals, and inauthentic writings. Consequently, it is being represented as mythic and ritualistic religion. Sometime it is represented as a sect of Hinduism or Islam or syncretism of both. I think Albert Einstein¹ might have declared the following statement to resolve the conflict between science and religion in the West:

Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.

—Albert Einstein

It can be easily inferred from the above statement that science and religion could complement each other to find the truth. But some zealot theologians had gone to such an extent that they misconstrued the above quotation of Einstein as follows to show the superiority of religion over science:

"Science without religion is blind, religion without science is lame."

The above-misconstrued statement of Einstein is quoted by many Christian theologians and now it has also been quoted by an Eastern scholar, Javasudarshana, for that very reason to show the supremacy of religion over science². The same misconstrued statement has been quoted by some Sikh scholars to support superiority of religion over the science. The scholars of *Gurbani* do not have to construe any statement of anybody or any information (data) to interpret *Gurbani* because it is already scientific and logical philosophy.

The above example clearly indicates that if the scholars of today can misconstrue the well-established statement of a well known Nobel Laureate and scientist, Einstein, then one can easily imagine how much misconstrued information could be found in the old writings of Sikhism during the 18th and 19th centuries? My observations of the Sikh history indicate that most of the statements of Guru Gobind Singh have been misconstrued and in many cases he has been represented as leading Sikhism away from the Nanakian Philosophy. Simi-

larly, Guru Nanak and other Gurus of the House of Nanak have been misrepresented in the old as well as in the contemporary Sikh literature. The Sikhs are very fortunate that they can find the Nanakian philosophy in original in the Bani of Guru Nanak that has been enshrined in the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* (AGGS) by Guru Arjan. Thus, the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* is the most authenticated and primary source of the Nanakian philosophy to construct Sikhism. Therefore, it is imperative for each scholar to be diligent in quoting information from ancient writings and secondary sources to construct Sikhism. And the authenticity of such sources should be tested with Nanakian philosophy from the AGGS, the touchstones of truth.

To evaluate the acceptability of Nanakian philosophy it is important to understand a few terms, which have been used in this article. First of all one must understand the terms *Sikhi* and *Guru* :

1. Sikhi

ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥⁵ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 465)

Sikhi is the teachings of the Guru's philosophy.

This word, *Sikhi*, has been anglicized as *Sikhism*.

2. Guru

Now a question arises. Who is the Guru in the above phrase? Here again Guru Nanak has also explained this as follows:

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥ (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 943)

Sabad is Guru, consciousness and intention toward it make one its disciple (Sikh).

The above phrase also defines who is the Sikh? The Sikh is a person who follows the Sabd Guru. Now next question is that who realized this Sabd and declared it '*Sabad Guru*'?

Chahal in one of his research articles has emphasized that Nanak was declared as Guru by Guru Angad and then by Guru Arjan in their *Bani*.

i) **Guru Angad:**

ਦੀਖਿਆ ਆਖਿ ਬੁਝਾਇਆ ਸਿਫਤੀ ਸਚਿ ਸਮੇਉ ॥
ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਕਿਆ ਉਪਦੈਸੀਐ ਜਿਨ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਉ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 150)

They, to whom the instructions (of Nanak) has taught and put on the right path, remain imbibed in the praises of the Almighty.

What instructions can be imparted to them, who have Guru Nanak as their Guru⁶.

ii) **Guru Arjan**

ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਪੇਖਿਆ ਸੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਰਭਾਸਿ ਨ ਪਰਿਆ ਰੇ ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 612)

Those, who have heard and analyzed the philosophy of Guru Nanak, do not fall into the problems.

It is important to understand the following terms in their real perspective to avoid any confusion.

1. Gurbani

It is already a well established term but is being used very loosely by many scholars although it has already been defined precisely and concisely by Bhai Kahn Singh as follows:

The Bani (Sabd) uttered by the mouth of Guru Nanak and his successor (to the House of Nanak) Sat Gurus under the intuition of the Almighty is called Gurbani.

He further emphasized in a note that although Bhai Gurdas uses this term for the Bani of all other *Atam Gianis*, however, this term is reserved especially for the Bani of our Sat Gurus.

2. Nanakian Philosophy

Nanakian philosophy may be a strange term for some traditional scholars since it is not commonly used in the Sikh literature. Since we are living in the Science Age, therefore, we have to be very specific and precise in disseminating the *Gurbani* and Sikhism in their real perspective to the humanity of the Science Age. This term has already been used by some Sikh scholars in the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, Chandigarh, The

Sikh Review, Kolkata, and *Understanding Sikhism – The Research Journal*, Laval, Quebec, Canada.

However, this term has not been defined properly to distinguish it from *Gurbani* and 'Sikh philosophy'. It has been defined by Chahal as follows:

A philosophy promulgated by Guru Nanak that was taught by other nine Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak. It is embodied in his Bani incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

Note : The term '*Gurbani*' is used for the *Bani* (verses) of Guru Nanak and of other Sikh Gurus, which have been incorporated in the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* and authenticated by Guru Arjan in 1604 and reiterated its authenticity by Guru Gobind Singh around 1706, while the term 'Nanakian philosophy' is used for the philosophy embodied in the *Bani* of Guru Nanak.

3. Sikh Philosophy

Some have suggested using 'Sikh philosophy' in place of Nanakian philosophy. I have not found if this term has been defined by anybody so far. We need to define it specifically and precisely.

4. Gurmat

'*Gurmat*' is a term, which is used very widely in Sikh literature. This also needs to be defined specifically and precisely.

Acceptability of Nanakian Philosophy

Let us examine some principles of Nanakian philosophy having the characteristics to be accepted in the Science Age.

1. Purification of Polluted Mind

The following stanza from *Japu* of Guru Nanak is the best example in which Guru Nanak has used simple science and logic to emphasize his spiritual experience to purify the polluted mind:

ਭਰੀਐ ਹਥੁ ਪੈਰੁ ਤਨੁ ਦੇਹ ॥ ਪਾਣੀ ਧੋਤੈ ਉਤਰਸੁ ਖੇਹ ॥
 ਮੂਤ ਪਲੀਤੀ ਕਪੜੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਦੇ ਸਾਬੁਣੁ ਲਈਐ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਇ ॥
 ਭਰੀਐ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਪਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਏ ਨਾਵੈ ਕੈ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 4)

If hands, feet and body are soiled with dust
 they can be washed with water.

If the clothes become impure with urine (chemicals)
 they can be cleansed by washing with soap
 (other chemicals).

If mind is polluted with sins that can be purified by
 understanding the Almighty and by imbibing Its philosophy.

It is quite convincing methodology demonstrating that different types of cleansing methods are required to cleanse the different types of pollution. It is also apparent that how scientific and logical is the philosophy of Guru Nanak and it also indicate that this principle can be accepted easily by the humanity of the Science Age.

2. Commencing Verse

The Commencing verse of Guru Nanak, which appears on the beginning of the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* on its first page and then on the beginning of all the major sections of the Sikh Scripture, is generally called as *Mool-Mantra*. However, its critical study indicates that it is a concise and precise definition of God. If it is interpreted properly in its real perspective it can be accepted by the majority of the humanity of the Science Age. Commencing Verse of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is as follows:

ੴ
 ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ
 ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ
 ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥

After extensive research Chahal has come up with a scientific and logical interpretation of the Commencing Verse of the *Guru Granth Sahib* as follows, nevertheless, still a better

interpretation than this may become available in the future:

The One and Only, That, the Infinite;

Exists;

Creator;

Without fear

Without enmity;

Timeless (Without effect of time and space);

Neither takes birth nor dies;

Created by Itself;

Enlightener; and Bounteous.”⁸

The first part **ੴ** is generally pronounced by many theologians and scholars as **ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ** (*Ik Oankaar*) or **ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ** (*Ikankaar*). The survey of the available literature indicates that this pronunciation might have been coined by the early Sikh scholars who were under the strong influence of Vedic and Puranic philosophy.

Dr Sahib Singh explains **ੴ** as **ੲਿਕ + ਓ** or **ਓਅੰ** or **ਓ** (Oam or Om) + **ਕਾਰ** and pronounces **ੴ** as ‘ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ’ or ‘ਏਕ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ’. And many scholars followed him. Interpretations by Dr Sahib Singh and other scholars clearly takes us back to the ancient philosophy that **ੴ** originated from ‘Om’, ‘Oankaar’, ‘Omkaar’, the ancient descriptive or specific names for the Almighty. Some scholars quote *Pauri 15 of Vaar 3 of Bhai Gurdas* that it should be pronounced *Ik Oankaar*.

Chahal indicates that as soon as the pronunciation of **ੴ** was accepted as ‘ਏਕ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ’ then as OMKAAR as suggested by Dr Sahib Singh it encouraged Parama Nand and others to undermine originality and uniqueness of the philosophy of Guru Nanak by declaring that **ੴ** is not a new word coined by Guru Nanak but he borrowed it from Upanishads because ‘Oankaar’ or ‘Omkaar’ were already in use in various Upanishads. The only thing Guru Nanak did was to add numeral ‘1’ to confirm the ‘Oneness’ of God, which is also found in the Upanishads.

Parma Nand has also tried to confirm the already wrong concept that the Commencing verse is called *Mool-Mantra* according to the rules of Vedas for declaring a word or sentence as *Mantra*, *Beej Mantra* or *Mool-Mantra*. *Mantra*, according to Vedas, is a word or sentence repeated again and again under certain condition forces the deities to perform miraculous work to fulfil the desires of the performers (devotees). On the contrary there is no place of *Mantra* system in Nanakian philosophy.

Many believe that ੴ is an abbreviation 'ਏਕ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ' or 'ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ'. It cannot be possible because there is no abbreviation of any word in *Gurbani* except that of *Mahla* as m: (M). *Mahla* is not a *Gurbani* word rather it was devised by Guru Arjan to represent the succession number of the Guru who succeeded to the House of Nanak. Moreover, 'ਏਕ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ' and 'ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ' means "creator" and 'One Creator' as used in *Oankaar Bani* at pages 929-938 in the AGGS. Therefore, ੴ cannot be interpreted as 'Creator' since this attribute is represented as '*Karta Purkh*'. One attribute cannot be repeated twice to define the Almighty.

The critical study of Chahal indicated that ੴ is ੴ + ਓ + Extended End of E. The numeral '1' should be pronounced as 'Ik' and the letter E (Oora) with open end as 'Oh'. he further said that letter open 'Oora' means 'Oh' in Punjabi-English Dictionary and in Mahan Kosh of Bhai Kahn Singh 'Oh' of Punjabi means 'That' in English. The open end of 'Oora' has been extended geometrically to characterize it as ਬੇਅੰਤ (*Beant* - Infinite) or ਅਨੰਤ (*Anant* - Infinite). Thus, it should be pronounced as ieku E by ਅੰਤ or ਅਨੰਤ (*Ik + Oh + Beant or Anant*) = *One and Only, That, the Infinite*. In some verses in *Gurbani* the Almighty has also been addressed as One and Only, That, and the Infinite. That portrays the characteristics of Oneness and Infiniteness of That, the Transcendent Entity.

In the context of 'One and Only, That, Infinite' (*Ik Oh Beant*) it is important to quote a thought of Einstein (1879-1955) as reported by Alan Ha'rris (Translator of his

autobiography), "*If he had a God it was the God of Spinoza*". (Spinozism: (1728), the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) who taught that reality is one substance with an infinite number of attributes of which only thought and extension are capable of being comprehended by the human mind.) I am proud to say that this is very close to ੴ of Guru Nanak, prophesied about 200 years before Spinoza. After about 450 years Einstein, a scientist, realized the same concept of God defined by Guru Nanak, whereas, many Sikh theologians and scholars failed to recognize the originality and uniqueness of the Almighty given in the Commencing verse by Guru Nanak.

The above discussion clearly indicates that Guru Nanak coined a new original and unique logo, ੴ which has not been understood in its real perspective by some Sikh theologians.

ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ (*Nirvaer*)

Many peoples believe that God could be revengeful and creates floods, causes earthquakes, causes deadly diseases, famines, etc. to punish the mankind. But according to Guru Nanak God cannot be revengeful. It is without any enmity with anyone. Einstein realized this attribute of God described by Guru Nanak after 450 years of Guru Nanak, when he remarked: "Subtle is the Lord but malicious He is not". Therefore, this is another characteristic of the Almighty assigned by Guru Nanak, which can be easily accepted in the Science Age.

ਅਜੂਨੀ (*Ajuni*)

It is well-established concept in the ancient philosophy of India that God appears in the form of human again and again when the cruelty on humanity is on the increase. Contrary to this in Nanakian philosophy the Almighty does not come into any human form. It neither takes birth nor dies.

After about 450 years of Guru Nanak, Einstein has realized this attribute described by Guru Nanak that the Almighty does not take anthropomorphic forms (human

form). This is another characteristic of the Almighty assigned by Guru Nanak, which can be easily accepted in the Science Age.

In a recent Nationwide Survey conducted by Harris Interactive it has been reported that 48% of the population of USA think of God as a spirit or power that can take on human form (anthropomorphic form) while another 27% think God as a spirit or power that does not take on human form and 10% do not believe in God (Shannon Reilly and Bob Laird, *USA Today*, October 24, 2003).

Had this survey conducted in India the percentage of people believing in God and taking on the human form (anthropomorphic form) would have been over 95% since they are still suffering under the heavy burden of ancient philosophy.

What could be the reason that Guru Nanak's philosophy promulgated more than 500 years ago in India had no effect on the majority of the Indian population, however, in USA, Einstein, a scientist and a Nobel Laureat, and the 27% of USA people accept this attribute, ਅਜੂਨੀ (*Ajuni*) (God does not take anthropomorphic form) given by Guru Nanak?

It is not very difficult to figure out that Nanakian philosophy has not been disseminated in its real perspective by the custodians of *Sikhi* (Sikhism). On the contrary many scholars are trying to portray it as a mythical and ritualistic religion.

On the other hand educated people in USA who are searching for the truth wherever they can find have figured it out that God does not take human form. It could be possible somebody is disseminating the Nanakian philosophy in some other garb in the USA (Western countries) whereas the Sikh scholars failed to disseminate even to the Sikhs.

3. Evaluation of Things/Philosophy

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਵਸਤੁ ਸਿਵਾਣਿ ਕੈ ਤਾ ਕੀਚੈ ਵਾਪਾਰੁ ॥

Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1410

Gurbani teaches that one must evaluate the things / philosophy, if convinced, then adopt / follow it.

4. Importance of Deliberation/Discussion

ਸਭਸੈ ਉਪਰਿ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ *Guru Granth Sahib, p. 904*

Highest importance is given on the deliberation / discussion on the sabd (philosophy) of the Guru (in the Guru Granth Sahib).

5. Freedom of Expression

There is complete freedom of expression in Sikhism. And discussion can only be held if one listens to others and expresses one's views to the others:

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਰਹੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਿਛੁ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਹੀਐ ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib, p. 4*)

"As long as one lives in this world one must listen others and express oneself to the others (to find the truth)."

6. Importance of Research

Gurbani explains that those who research progress:

ਖੋਜੀ ਉਪਜੈ ਬਾਦੀ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਹਉ ਬਲਿ ਬਲਿ ਗੁਰ ਕਰਤਾਰਾ ॥

(*Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1255*)

"The researcher progresses while the other (discursive and aimless) perishes, (Nanak) sacrifices himself on the Guru, the Creator."

Conclusions

- Nanakian philosophy is scientific and logically thus it should be disseminated scientifically and logical during the Modern Science Age.

- The principles of Nanakian philosophy have all the characteristics to be accepted in the Science Age.

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Guru Granth Sahib and Inter-Faith Dialogue

Jogeshwar Singh*

Inter-faith dialogue is a conversation between two or more religions. It is a living encounter of men and women of different faiths. Real dialogue takes place in on ultimate reality, world and man. Dialogue is a practical activity and it is possible to write about it purely in term of theory and practice. Dialogue is opening upto the other and his point of view, it requires the turning to the other. It is a practical exercise, a mode of experimental contact between persons whose input contains are different.

Inter-faith dialogue helps the whole world to live in peace and harmony. There were conflicts or wars in the name of religion in past. All this happened due to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of scriptures and less knowledge of others religion, culture, civilization etc. The human character is shown very well by the conflicts in between or with other religions, that how much aggressive we are. If we are humble and sincere, then we must go for dialogue to resolve the matter. If every religion of the world teaches us humbleness then why we are so much aggressive? This shows that we are egoist and self-centric.

In the late 19th century began serious attempt to bring the religious leaders of the world together in a spirit of reconciliation, concentrating on what united them rather than what kept them apart. The pioneer assembly was the World's Parliament of Religions. Its aims were to introduce believers to one another, to emphasize the universal element in all

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religions and to work for the moral uplift of the world. World War I brought these efforts to a temporary halt. Between the World War I and II world congress and fellowships of faiths continued to meet regularly under the lengthening shadow of various forms of totalitarianism. These conferences and congresses continued to bring together religious leaders. Yet there will be an increasing sense of threat to religion being posed by the terrorism and materialism. So, frequent calls were made for the world's religious leaders to bind their people together to meet these pressures.

We live in the global village. People comes closer with modern means of transportation, communication and technology e.g. airways, internet, cable, mobile etc. It is the need of the hour that we understand one-another if we are to live together in relative peace and harmony. It is especially imperative and desirable that we understand different cultures and religious traditions. Discussions and debates of religious ideas and concepts to explore together uncharted dimensions of the spirit and to discover those common things spread across traditions as well as those distinctive things that had given each tradition its special character and vocation.

Dialogue is not only the encounter with the other and not merely occasion for change but an opportunity for growth. In the words of religious term these types of dialogue leads to spiritual growth. They do lie in the shared reality of believing, praying, meditating, reading scripture, acting out rituals and practising the spiritual life and discipline. There are common and shared dimensions of our varied pathways lifting human to divine life. The inter-faith dialogue leads toward the renewal of religious life and a more fruitful encounter with the world. The universal dimension of each tradition is that they might come to co-operate with one another in service of humanity.

Inter-faith dialogue and religious pluralism are more relevant in the Indian context. In India there are diversity of cultures, languages and religions. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism

and Sikhism are major religions of Indian origin. The first Muslim encounter with India (Sind) goes back to the eighth century. Muslims came as invaders and finally as conquerors to settle down as political rulers of the land. Sufi saints continued to be popular among and revered by all including the non-Muslims. There has been movement around 15th century which exhorts man to rise above sectarian level. Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev, Ramanand, Farid and some others made a significant contribution in this direction. Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus explained fine examples of religious freedom and tolerance in their utterances.

Sikhism is a humanistic religion. Guru Nanak was the founder of this youngest religion of the world. The first prophetic message of Guru Nanak after communion with God : *there is no Hindu - no Musalman* emphasized the primacy of the innate human spirit. Guru Gobind Singh the tenth Nanak rephrased the same message when he proclaimed that all humanity is one in spirit.

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੈ।

Akal Ustat

Sikhism does not believe in exclusive claim over Divine revelation. All revelations, all modes, all worships and all pathways are co-valid. Guru Nanak did not turn the concept of oneness of God into the concept of oneness of the path. The approaches to reality are as varied and infinite as God's qualities themselves are. Guru Nanak's vision of pluralistic society and civilization is that in which there could be no place for unitary polity, state absolutism and political totalitarianism etc. Those religions which preach the Oneness of God tend to be totalitarian and entail a unitary polity. These religions claim to be the full and final and the believers following their path are the true believers of God. Only these true believers of God are led to the kingdom of God. Nonbelievers are condemned to the devil in the other world. Sikhism never claims this type of authority.

Sikh religion is universal in the sense that it is not tied down to a particular tribe, race, clan, creed and region etc. It

takes humanity as a whole. *Gurbani* clears this notion by proclaiming :

ਬਾਣੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀ ਸਬ ਕੋ ਬੋਲੈ ॥ *Guru Granth Sahib, p. 294*

Guru Granth Sahib's essential concerns are universal and they are for the whole humanity. The problems which have been discussed in the scriptures, relate with human beings of the whole world. The solutions which are given also for the whole mankind. *Gurbani* socializes human reality so that man's life and activity came to have a societal aspect and social activity came to possess a humanistic character. Unity of God advances the theory of universal brotherhood. All people are equal in status. It is the duty of human beings to love the whole world as his/her own family.

Sikh tradition of inter-faith dialogue originated with Guru Nanak himself. Guru Nanak entered into dialogue with the leaders of other religions and put before them his own views. He made discourses with Siddhas, Sufis, Pandits, Qazis, Scholastic exponents and practitioners of other faiths. His well known discourse was *Siddh Gosht* in which Yogis attempted to convert the Guru into their fold through theological debate as well as by display of their occult powers, but Guru Nanak exhorted them to be true Yogis by realizing and practising the true spirit of their faith. The dialogue must be held without hurting the feelings of any of the participants, ever retaining serenity and sobriety and aiming at realizing the truth. This is the basis as well as the ideal of inter-faith dialogue in Sikhism. In *Guru Granth Sahib* we also find dialectic elements in some hymns of the Bhagtas. In the *slokas* of Kabir we find dialogue between Namdev and Trilochan. There are certain *slokas* of Farid and Kabir which have been commented upon by the Gurus. The objective apparently is to clarify or supplement the message through dialectic means rather than creating any polemic.

Acceptance of religious pluralism and religious tolerance as contained in Guru's utterances and preserved in the Scripture is lived in the lives of the Gurus and in the Sikh

tradition in general. Guru Nanak was revered by the people of all denominations. It is clarified from one phrase '*Guru Nanak Shah Fakir, Hindu ka Guru, Musalman ka Pir*'. Emperor Jahangir himself acknowledged in his *Tujak-i-Jahangiri* that Guru Arjan was gathering both Hindus and Muslims around him. Guru Tegh Bahadur gave away his life so as to protect the religious freedom of man. He offered himself for sacrifice to stop the forcible conversion of Hindus by the fanatic Muslim ruler Aurangzeb. Pir Buddhu Shah with his sons fought along with Guru Gobind Singh against the deceit and decadence of Hindu Rajput Chiefs and the Mughal oppression. Many Hindus and Muslims were also devotees of Gurus. Bhai Kanahaiya is the best example of a Sikh seeing the same divine essence in every human being, treating all human beings as spiritually one and ethnically equal. Historical evidences of Sikh religion shows that the diversity of religion must be accepted and respected not only theoretically but practically too.

Guru Granth Sahib envisaged a pluralistic approach to inter-faith dialogue as one of the means to dissolve the rigidities of religious exclusiveness and the concomitant religious antagonism and to bring about inter-religious understanding and inter-community accommodation, unity, harmony and peace.

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The Interfaith Guru : *Guru Granth Sahib*

Nanak Singh Nishtar*

ABSTRACT

Wherever there was degradation in human values in any part of the world God has sent his messengers to give proper guidance. Their followers named their teachings as code of conduct for their group of people and named their compartment as a religion or faith. Most of these, believe in God with different names in various languages. Though some faiths do not believe in God nor disbelieve God, they advocate human values. But it is most unfortunate that much of the blood of the human race was shed in the name of God and religion throughout the world, and India is not an exception to this. To confine my paper regarding the "The inter-faith Guru" I will ignore the Dravidians and Aryans relations, and confine myself to the period of this Guru only where Hinduism and Islam were conflicting each other.

The fifth Guru Shri Guru Arjan Dev Ji compiled it in 5 years from 1599 to 1604, and it was installed in Shri Har Mandir Sahib, popularly known as Golden Temple. Without the fear of any contradiction, it can be said that this is the only scripture of any religion, which is written during the lifetime and under the supervision of their founders. The original name given to this scripture was *Shri Aad Granth Sahib*. Shri and Sahib are the honorific prefix and suffix. *Aad* means primal, the first. Later, the 10th Guru Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji added in *Shri Aad Guru Granth* the compositions of 9th Guru Shri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji in the year 1706. And bestowed it with

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the Guruship in the year 1708, putting an end to the Guruship in an individual person. Henceforth, it is called as *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, indicating its status as the Guru. It has commanded the same honour and reverence as would be due to the Guru himself. It is the focal point of Sikh devotion. The object of veneration in Gurdwaras is *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. Gurdwara is in fact that place of worship wherein *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* is seated. No images or idols are permitted inside a Gurdwara.

To preserve and protect the authenticity and sanctity of this text, so many measures were adopted and several sacrifices were made. One of them is by the 7th Guru Shri Guru Har Rai Ji. His eldest son and celebrated scholar Shri Ram Rai was sent to the court of Emperor Aurangzeb for rendering some explanation of certain misunderstood hymns. Instead of doing justice with the theme, he avoided facing the debate and replaced only one word while quoting. When learnt about this, Guru Sahib asked his son not to show his face and also instructed the Sikhs not to have any terms with him and his people. This first ex-communication of Sikhism stands valid till today, and will last eternally. In every Ardas (concluding prayer) a pardon is sought, for the mistake if any word is added, omitted or wrongly uttered during the recitation of the hymns of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*.

This scripture of 1430 large size pages is the voluminous and latest of all the religious texts of the world. Unlike some other scriptures, it is neither history nor mythology, nor a collection of incantation. It is written in poetry and the chapters are arranged in order of 31 Ragas (classical styles of musical measures). It is in Gurmukhi script, which is recognized as script of Punjabi Language. It is a unique multi-lingual scripture, unlike the others containing in a single language. It is in a mixed spoken and communicative language of the masses from different parts of the country described as Sant *Bhasha* apart from Persian and Sanskrit. *Shri*

Guru Granth Sahib is the scripture of Sikhism, its spirit is profound and there is nothing sectarian in it. It contains universal truths, universal brotherhood and the songs of Divine love and grace. Thus this Sikh Scripture is in the true sense a Universal Scripture of Mankind. And this is not a Sikh Guru but in true spirit an "interfaith Guru" preaching humanism, spiritualism and secularism to all sections of the society.

***Guru Granth Sahib* and the New World Order**

Jasdev Singh Rai*

'Once God was a fact, now God is a belief'. Metaphorically, this is the hurdle that *Sikhi* has to overcome if it wants to resolve the crises inherent in the new world order.

The world today faces a crisis of intellectual faith and political insecurity having gone through a long period of modernity and now intellectually engaged in the anarchy of postmodernism. It is questioning the structures of modernity, such as the nation state, secular socio-political systems and scientific rationalism. The new uncharted territory is postmodern deconstructionism, global capital and superpower expediency.

Only until a century and half ago, it was considered 'a priory' that 'God' or a 'supernatural phenomenon' existed and human beings were its most important creation. The 'explanations' and consequent rules of human activity extrapolated from the assumption of 'God' evolved as competing, contradictory and uncompromising 'revelations' (now called religions) giving rise to the inevitable politics of supremacy and conformity. In Europe there was only Christendom and no secular. The western world responded to its internecine attritional conflicts between different Christian interpretations by relegating the 'a priory fact' to the realm of personal belief or faith. The 'secular' or 'saeculum' which was in the private sphere of Christian doctrine as a time of lapse, emerged in the public sphere as the dominant factum of

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knowledge.

Secularism claimed neutrality and rapidly constructed itself as the 'scientific' despite lacking the predictability of science. It sought to justify its credibility by appealing to 'human reason' which in turn staked its legitimacy as scientific logic.

Postmodernism has deconstructed the principles of 'reason' and secularism throwing the intellect back into the void of uncertainty and encouraged the phenomenon of parallel and multiple rationalities. Human beings are no longer convinced by the cold logic of atomistic 'science' to answer the deeper questions. The hollowed space is being occupied, among others, by 'spirituality' whose predominant claimants are pre-secular philosophies now called religions or 'faiths' by the secularists.

However 'faiths' largely continue to remain in the private sphere having accepted for themselves the politically and factually disenfranchised corner of 'personal belief'. Their engagement in the real world of power is encouraged through the process of dialogue and redefinition of themselves as apolitical and within the general principles of liberal secular humanism. However major contradictions remain between 'faiths' as their fundamental theories are conflicting and uncompromising. The prospect of exclusion, crusades and *jihads* loom behind the rhetoric of peace and universal God.

This is the inherited intellectual base of the new world order which is a stage in the linear historical perspective of the west. Colonialism and participant hegemony has resulted in eastern paradigms imagining themselves in the same construction and historical conflicts that have marked western history. They have obliterated the cyclical aspects of eastern world and ignored the fact that the east has been here before... The 'intellectual' history of the east has been marginalised to the same peripheral regions as of western religions and faiths', which is within the personal sphere. Faith has the luxury and annoyance of an idea without responsibility.

The world nevertheless is seeking a philosophy that can claim the public sphere, move beyond modernity and post modernity and encompass the marginalised domain of spirituality. This brings us to *Sikhi* and its possible contribution to the wider new world. The rhetorical interpretations and writings of *Sikhi* ascribe to it a pluralistic philosophy that can co-exist with science. However by imaging itself as a religion, *Sikhi* cannot go any further. Instead it has adopted western hegemonic Judeo-Christian episteme and unwittingly allowed its hermeneutic influence in self understanding. The idea 'politics and religion are inseparable' has failed to move beyond the slogan because the idea is immediately sieged by the extremely restricted modernist scope of the domain of religion! This is obvious in Akali Dal's politics.

Sikhi needs to be reinterpreted in relation to Indian history first and subsequently its wider scope needs to be critically appraised as a solution to western hegemonic intellectual stalemate. If it is considered that Indian thought has been there already, then *Sikhi* would be seen to be a development resulting from the crises that faced Indian socio-political history. It is easy to see the great age of Upanishads as the postmodernist stage of Indian history when deconstructionism led to many theories but also insecurity and collapse of order. This offered an opportunity to a radical authoritarian regime, Brahmanism, to dominate Indian society by creating order but privilege for itself. The anarchist postmodernism of Indian thought was deported from cities and became the *sanyasi* world. This weakened Indian society, paving the way for its domination by more positivist and aggressive ideologies such as Islam.

The *Guru Granth Sahib* brings the two strands of Indian thought together, restoring the intellectual strengths of the *sanyasis* back into society and retaining order within society without the hard line discriminatory regime of Brahmanism. Interestingly, neither strands had any crises with the idea of 'a priory' non secular. *Sikhi* is unconvinced of the need for

secularism, not because it is doctrinaire, but because the crises of legitimacy that faced western Christianity in the Middle Ages did not exist in Indian thought. Therefore, it is self injury and self limiting for Sikhs to imagine *Sikhi* in the context of western incidents and wounds by categorising itself as a religion.

The *Guru Granth Sahib* speaks in several languages in parallel. It is in poetry, put to ragas; it requires meditation and adherence to a discipline and eventually to practice. To gain from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* one needs to understand these various languages coherently and comprehensively. Modernism restricts *Guru Granth* to the single domain of intellectual discourse. The Sikh philosophy can only have relevance, when the hermeneutic of *Guru Granth Sahib* is reviewed through its many methods of parallel communications thus placing it immediately beyond the postmodern.

The *Guru Granth Sahib* promotes pluralism. It further encourages rationalism but also brings home the limits of human logic. It moves beyond the rational by encouraging exploration of the unknown without any doctrinaire position. It can encompass science without being limited by scientific logic. It can encourage co-existence with alternatives without fear. It can promote a set of ethical values without the exclusivity of proscriptive doctrines. The *Guru Granth Sahib* deconstructs the State, promotes alternatives but accepts the inevitability of the State. However the first step is to rediscover the language and originality of *Guru Granth Sahib* without corruption from western historical experiences, Brahmanic paradigms and secular hermeneutics. It then needs to cross over from the private domain of faith to the public sphere of fact.

Inter-Religious Dialogue and Action in the 21st Century : *Guru Granth Sahib* Perspective

Dr. Shamsher Singh*

Modern science and technology and means of fast communication are turning the whole world into a global village. The growing materialism, selfishness and lust for power have shifted the focus from God to man. With this narrow-mindedness conflicts are increasing at the level of the individual, communities and nations. It is also due to prejudice and misunderstanding of religion. We are all surrounded by hostility, distrust, fear and suspicion. In the present inter-dependent world we cannot isolate ourselves from the others. In multi-faith and multi-cultural nations there is need of mutual understanding. The unity among the different nations is possible only through understanding their religions in true sense. Inter-religious dialogue is a hopeful step for world unity and peaceful life.

In the literal sense the word 'dialogue' is exchange of words between two or more than two persons on a common subject. Dialogue is neither debate nor conversation. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (Vol. 15, p.634), the word 'dialogue' is most oftenly used in the context of the study of world religions. The meaning of dialogue in the *Random House Dictionary of English Language*, (p.398) is given as under :

"An exchange of ideas or opinion on a particular issue, especially a political or religious issue, with the view to reaching an amicable agreement and settlement."

Dialogue is not quite so free wheeling as conversation.

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It is oriented to the relevant issue. The basic meaning of dialogue is to exchange and grow in the perception and understanding of truth. With this process the personal trust and vision deepens and expands to the level of mutual adjustment. We should proceed in the dialogue with the learning attitude.

Inter-religious dialogue operation is possible in three areas :

In Practical : We collaborate to help humanity.

In Cognitive : We seek understanding of the truth.

In Spiritual : We attempt to experience the partner's religion.

John Dunne is of the opinion that passing over into other's religious experience and coming back enlightened broadens and deepens one's sensibility.

Three stages are involved in inter-religious dialogue. At the first stage we begin to know each other. With this misunderstandings are removed.

In the second stage we begin to discern values in the partner's tradition and then if we are serious and sensitive we together begin to explore new areas of reality. Patiently pursued dialogue can become an instrument of new revelations, a further unveiling of reality. Recognising the values of others faiths and to create a living relationship with man as well as with God should be the real motive of dialogue.

Religion is more important as it is the base of dialogue. Religion is the base to search the deeper truths of life. All great religions of the world teach mankind love, tolerance and peace on the earth. One of the fundamental roles of religion in any society is to expose the dehumanizing aspect of the society, seek righteousness and correct oppression.

Religion is life in God, love of man, charity for all and service to the humanity. Spiritual truth is the other name of religion. Science can comprehend truth through knowledge. Philosophy aims at knowledge of goodness and beauty and religion at the attainment of truth.

We enter into dialogue with the purpose to learn, change

and grow in the perception and understanding of truth. It is expected from every participant to come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity. Without trust in the feelings of men relating to different faiths we cannot have the real dialogue. Trust is essential because it is the base on which the peace and harmony of life can be built successfully. Trust requires patience, persistence, realism, restraint and understanding of human beings.

It is very important to respect the feelings and emotions of men of different faiths. The participants should restrain from any kind of adverse criticism of any religion. One should listen honestly, respond to any clarification sought by the partner and should understand constructively what is being said by the other.

For every partner it is also essential that he should have authentic faith in the essence and soul of one's own religion. It does not mean that one should stubbornly adhere to notions and ideas which are either misinterpreted to suit one's own interest or supposed to have been taught hundreds of years ago, but which have become out-dated today.

It is also important and necessary to have knowledge about others religious scriptures, doctrines, rituals, ethics, festivals, customs, beliefs and social attitudes, without any feeling of prejudice. It is imperative to learn the spiritual values of other religions.

To attain true harmony through inter-religious dialogue we must have unconditional love for others. Pre-conceived misconceptions cause feelings of suspicion and hatred. It is only possible when one is aware of the presence of God's light in all beings. Sikh Gurus advocated this thought with great stress, in the Holy Scripture, as under :

All are created of the same air and same clay.

Same is the light in all. *Guru Granth Sahib, p.36)*

First, God created His light and from its power
were all men made.

Year, from God's light came the whole Universe
So, whom shall we call good, whom bad.

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p.1349)

Dialogue is a dynamic medium. Dynamic attitude in dialogue inspires always its participants with the courage of conception and realization. The partner deepens, expands and modifies his religion's self-definition. A claim for monopoly of full truth closes the door to welcome any other faith. Absoluteness is against the dynamic nature of living religions. Openness of mind is a way to proceed towards understanding the truth. Any religion that claims itself to be the final and refuses to see beyond its boundaries, becomes static. The fifth Nanak after compiling the Holy Scripture talks about limitless God.

The participants should not come into the dialogue with hard and fast assumptions. Each partner should not only listen with open mind and sympathy but also attempt to agree with the views of others while maintaining integrity of one's own tradition. Openness and integrity both imply the possibilities to understand the other's faiths.

When we talk outwardly we seem different and divided and when we see inwardly we unite. Religion is one, religious traditions and rituals are different.

Every participant should come with the purpose to learn and teach. With this method we will be able to go from the known to the unknown. If one partner comes to teach and stresses only his own view-point, the other is listener only; it becomes one-way traffic. Dialogue is mutual reflection, seeing one's self in the other. It is like two mirrors facing each other. The purpose of dialogue is sharing one's own spiritual experience towards a common discovery. When either of the partners makes an exclusive claim of his own faith, then, dialogue loses its real significance.

In the beginning the difficult and controversial issue may not be taken up. Issue and providing some common grounds should be tackled first. With this gradual process the personal

trust and vision deepens and expands to the level of mutual adjustment.

Four possible models of dialogue are often suggested : theological, scholarly, personal and creative. The final creative attitude means joining of hands on the part of two or more religions to complement each other. Dialogue in action is the most fruitful. Only academic discussions do not always achieve the desired object and aim. Mutual trust and understanding can find positive expression. The dialogue held in true sense never leaves the partners unaffected. It leads to deeper appreciation of another on the one hand, and on the other hand deepens the commitment to one's own religion. It heightens a person's perception of both the differences and similarities among religions. Through a dialogue one tradition not only undergoes re-conception within itself, it also begins to reconceive the other tradition. It leads to a recognition of common ground among various religious traditions.

The aim of dialogue is to bring peace through religion. All religions through different languages and symbols teach the same virtues of love, kindness, fraternity, forgiveness and compassion. Sikhism too teaches the same : Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man, and service to the mankind.

Thou art our only Father

We are only thy children. (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 611)

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of Sikhism, was imbued with the spirit of Divine power, strong will and firm faith in Almighty God. He was the saviour of the down-trodden and a spiritual and political liberator of Indian people. He says :

Recognize all mankind as one
The same Lord is the Creator and Nourisher of all
Recognize no distinction among them
The temple and the mosque are the same
So are the Hindu worship and Muslim prayer
Men are all one. (Akal Ustati)

True religious person never worries and never hates any faith. Tolerance of all religious multiplicities leads us to unite.

When spiritual truth becomes the subject-matter of dialogue it inspires all men to unite at equal level. Truth in its practical way is distinct and indispensable for human survival. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith, says :

Truth is higher

but still higher is truthful living.

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 62)

All conflicts, differences, wars and strifes are due to mental disequilibrium. Peace through religious dialogue is possible if it stands for spiritual reawakening of man. He is like a raw material. Inner evolution is possible through true religion.

At present the biggest necessity for world peace and unity demands reconciliation of religious differences at the root level. At the level of branches we seem scattered, different and divided. Religion begins with a simple rite and ends with sublime realization. The materialistic civilization has lost sight of moral values and considers that the principal of human survival lies merely in attainment of victory in competition.

Through inter-religious dialogue man can rise above the sense of I-am-ness and my-ness and the sense of conflict, hate and exploitation is eliminated. Sikh Gurus prayed to God to save the whole mankind :

O God, be merciful and keep everyone in Thy care.

O Lord, Bless us abundantly with our sustenance
and ridding us of our poverty, ferry us
across (the sea of material existence)

Lo, my God hath heard my prayer and the whole
creation is in cool comfort

O God, take me unto Thy embrace and
dispel all my woes.

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1251)